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"She was refreshed by speaking of the faithfulness of Him who was her Shepherd in the green pastures, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."—PAGE 73.

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Wayside Service;

OR,

THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS.

BY

ANNA SHIPTON,

AUTHOR OF

"TELL JESUS;" "THE SECRET OF THE LORD;"
"THE BROOK IN THE WAY;"
ETC., ETC.

"I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVETH."
JOB xix. 25.

Fourth Thousand.

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WAYSIDE SERVICE;

OR,

THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS.

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DEDICATION.

"ALL THY WORKS SHALL PRAISE THEE, O LORD, AND THY SAINTS SHALL BLESS THEE."

PSALM cxlv. 10.

TO

THE LORD JEHOVAH,

My Strength and my Song,

WHO SEETH THE END FROM THE BEGINNING,

AND DOTH NOT DESPISE THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS,

I COMMIT MY WEAK WORDS. I PRAY

HIM TO GUIDE AND BLESS THEM

TO THE POOR AND NEEDY

AND AFFLICTED OF

HIS FAMILY,

For His Name's Sake.

WAYSIDE SERVICE.

CHAPTER I.

THE BRIGHT LIGHT IN THE CLOUD.

"Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand."—1 KINGS xviii. 44.
"The Lord hath need of him."—LUKE xix. 34.

"YOU may be taken a long way to do a very little thing." This was my song in the night; my bright light in the cloud.

It was the chill, dark hour that precedes the dawn. A Christian nurse had kept her watch by my bed, which promised to be one of death. The silence of the weary hours had been unbroken save by my hoarse, struggling breath.

Lacking the faith of the little child, who trusts where it cannot trace the mystery of a Father's love, I whispered,

"I wonder *why* the Lord has brought me *here*."

My listener understood all that the regretful tone comprehended, and with the assurance produced by experience of the faithfulness of the Wonderful Counsellor she replied,

"*You may be taken a long way to do what seems to you a very little thing.*"

Those words were sweeter to my soul than a seraph's song. I recognised them from the heart of my compassionate High Priest, touched with the feeling of my infirmities. On the dew of His grace fell the manna that cometh down from heaven—"What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

"All the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. . . . When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end." In the

sanctuary of His presence we can alone understand His will; and "this is the will of God, even your sanctification." For the rest, what we know not now we shall know hereafter.

A natural dread of suffering is often the obstacle in the way of following the Lord fully; and the reasoning of our "own understanding" ignores the necessity of apparently trivial and fruitless objects in our path.

There are no circumstances that act solely on one individual. Many painful and mysterious positions have been necessary to bring about certain results for others; but they are used at the same time as a school for ourselves. If we have lived within the vail, we shall have discerned a Father's hand teaching and proving the child of His love. Any service which has not brought us into a deeper experience of God Himself will leave but an unprofitable servant, who will be inclined to regard any visible success attending his labours as wrought out by his own ability.

Many of the Lord's providential dealings with His people are preparatory to service: often it is a secret dealing with the soul; sometimes outward tribulation.

There is to each of us in our own individual history much that we cannot penetrate. Perhaps we are not prepared to receive it; perhaps the purpose is not yet fulfilled. If the Lord does not reveal to us His designs for the future, He does His will in our present duty; for "the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; . the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."

Each separate service and testimony has equal value in the sight of Him who requires it at our hands. If "the *Lord* has need of it," it is enough. When Jesus sent for the colt whereon never man sat, the owner of the ass little surmised that the Messiah had chosen him to furnish the means of His triumphal entrance into Jerusalem; still less could he penetrate all that was comprehended in that significant transaction.

When "cumbered about much serving," the eye is not on the Master, but on the service. Natural energy will climb mountains of difficulty, when patient acquiescence in the Lord's will, learnt perhaps slowly and painfully, would have wrought out an abiding blessing.

If a mother bids her child go into the garden close by her dwelling and gather her the fruit she has specified, and the child in the perversity of his will chooses to wander over a mountain for what he imagines to be rarer and more acceptable, will his mother approve him? He has been long from her side, he has gone into danger *unsent;* and if he finds fruit, it is the produce of disobedience, and the fruit-gatherer will miss the child's sweetest reward—a mother's smile.

I would not by this appear to underrate great enterprises seen of men, acknowledged and visibly blessed. But as the few rather than the many are called to them, I would seek to encourage and arouse those who complain that they are without any place of

service, or who, seeking to join themselves to some organization, become entangled in sisterhoods and brotherhoods. With eyes and hearts on the directors, they give flattering titles to men, and living on second-hand thoughts, remembered Bible readings, or first experiences, decline in the divine life, instead of seeking a fresh anointing, and growing up in the light and dew freely given of the Holy Spirit.

God's people are "a peculiar people." Each one possesses an individuality of his own. They are vessels of the Lord, in which His glory is to be made known to men and angels. There may be light enough to show that it is a vessel; but unless it be filled with the Spirit, the beauty of the skilful workmanship of the Potter is not shown forth. To be filled with religious opinions and sentiments is not to be filled with the Spirit. The absence of power in the church arises from lack of faith in receiving the Word of God, and individually appropriating it.

Vessels unto honour must be made meet for the service of the sanctuary. The least

of such vessels is of gold thrice refined, and must have the dross taken away. (Prov. xxv. 4.) This must be made evident to the church, if need be, for example and encouragement, and to the world for testimony. (John xvii. 21.) We know it is seen of Him who watches over His precious ore in the furnace, moulding it into a shape of beauty, though to others it may seem but an unsightly mass. In the smelting process of many a fiery ordeal nothing is seen as it really exists, nor is it for us to look too closely upon the strange fuel about to be consumed. For "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous: nevertheless *afterward* it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Heb. xii. 11.)

But though we may not too curiously investigate the process of sanctification at these seasons, there is one object to which the bewildered gaze may turn: it is to the sympathizing face of the great Refiner. Unchanged and unchangeable, He watches over His precious ore, until He beholds Himself

reflected there in increasing beauty. O child! it is not tin that He is refining, but gold, fine gold. He has prepared a place and service for you in the upper sanctuary in His Father's house, and He must prepare you for it. So doth He "make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He hath afore prepared unto glory." (Rom. ix. 23.) The temple of the Lord must be builded. He needs the chiselled stones, the polished jewels. He is preparing them, and the work is done in silence. We miss some from their accustomed places of service, and we mourn, and think how much we have *lost*. Oh, let us think how much will be their gain, and say, "Father, glorify *Thyself!*" There has ascended a cry from many of the Lord's disciples, to be conformed to the likeness of Him whom they love and serve. The Lord has heard, and He is answering them. Like the disciples of old, they are "amazed," and as they follow Him they are "afraid." Friends, ye have importuned the Lord for great things, now let Him choose the way in which they shall be received.

How is it that we do not expect these dealings? and instead of crying, "All these things are *against* us," that we have not faith to lay hold of them with "All things are *ours*"? Simply because we judge after the natural senses, not discerning the hand of the Lord in the instruments of His work, or expecting the refining as our own portion, if we look for a deeper experience of heavenly knowledge for ourselves.

A friend asked a very interesting woman in a convent we visited why, with health, and strength, and intelligence, she could not find occupation out of a convent? She replied, she wanted to be useful. She saw nothing to do, no place for her in the world, so she left her father, and mother, and family, and shut herself up for life, to live under the rule of a strict discipline, and offer a self-chosen sacrifice. Two young sisters had followed her; and I looked on their early resting-places in the burying-ground of the convent.

Many of my dear young countrywomen are wandering into self-chosen ways, joining

Romish institutions with Protestant names, and doing their own will with a sincerity of purpose that belongs to the natural heart, which they miscall "zeal."

You urge, "There must be blessing on good works." There is nothing "good" in itself. (2 Tim. ii. 5.) It is only popish superstition to pretend that place or service is holy, irrespective of God's Holy Spirit, or that counsel and example of others free *us* from the injunction to acknowledge the Lord in *all* our ways, that *He* may direct our paths. If you are born of God, and there is no place assigned to you, then you are a marvel in the spiritual creation. Perhaps you have some preconceived views of what service will best suit your natural taste. "As the eyes of a servant look unto the hand of his master, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress," so shall the servant of the King of kings be guided to the ministry the Lord has need of. The order of creation lacks nothing. The elephant, the horse, the whale, do not displace one another, and yet there is room

for the burnished bettle, the humming-bird, and the minnow in the glancing waters.

If there is *life* in you, there is place for you; but if you have only the form of life, and have built on any other foundation than Christ, then your work shall not abide the tribulation which shall prove it. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

When I was at Genoa, a morning of oppressive heat was followed by one of those devastating storms which sweep along the Mediterranean in the spring. The window of my apartment (now an hotel, but formerly a palace of the Prince of Orange) was close upon another of those ancient palaces with which this beautiful city abounds. Through the marble balustrades of the neighbouring window, I was attracted by the dimpled hands of a child, busy in placing some gathered roses around the columns. The burning sun left the roses fading. Some large drops of rain fell at intervals; as they

plashed heavily on the balcony, I saw the dark eyes of the Italian boy eagerly watching the promised refreshment to his withering treasures.

On the ornamental façade above grew a little white flower; the seed probably carried by the wind. I marvelled how its root could have found place, or earth, or nourishment; but I observed that it was close to the pipe that carried the rain to the well below. (Hosea xiv. 5.) Upon the slender stem were several buds; but flower, and buds, and leaves, were alike drooping under the scorching rays of an Italian sun.

Heavy, heavier, came the storm; and as the thunder rolled the child retreated from the window. I saw him no more. I looked the following day to the balcony. All that remained of the roses were a few discoloured leaves and the string which held the bare stems; but the sheltered flower above had blossomed into beauty, stronger for the storm. Where the tiny buds had been I counted six or seven white flowers, which, perhaps, in time have cast their seed again to some

hidden crevice, unseen and untended by man, but not unmarked by God, and needed by Him to teach a lesson of life and love to other hearts, as they had done to mine.

If there is a place for you, then assuredly, if you wait on the Lord, you will find it, and having found it, you will know what the Lord hath need of. The porters in the temple were as numerous as the singers, and the watching of the gates was as needful as the service of song. Those who stand by night in the house of the Lord are as much in service as the players on musical instruments in the morning. To know the Lord's will and to do it *is* service; and "the blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it."

Having arrived at a place where I was almost a stranger, one morning on waking these words were impressed on my mind: "Thou shalt make the widow's heart to sing for joy." I thought over all my poor and needy friends to remember who could lay claim to special providence and protection as a widow, but I could not find one that

satisfied me that I had anything to do for her; yet the words followed me with so much power that I thought, perhaps, I should be shown whom I could help during the day.

I had made arrangement with a chairman to take me to a neighbouring village, and while I waited for him the servant said,

"Have you heard of the shocking accident at the great house close by the road? One of the workmen has fallen from the high ladder and is crushed to death."

My heart sank, and I could scarcely articulate, "Was he young?"

The reply only increased my trouble: "Oh, yes; quite young."

I felt almost as if his blood were on my soul. Two evenings previously I walked by the garden where the building was proceeding, first intending to speak to the men, and give them some tracts, but I lacked courage when I heard their foolish jesting. I did not seek the Strength of Israel, who had ever been my shield and buckler, and my walk was accordingly.

I remembered a youth on the ladder, who was diverting his fellow-labourers with his remarks, as he had observed the tracts in my hand. And now where was he? I thought, perhaps the Lord had sent me to that spot with an invitation of mercy to a perishing soul, and the ribald joke and sneer of a poor creature on the brink of hell kept me from delivering it.

Imagination pictured the dying agonies of that active vigorous frame, and the undying agonies of the soul. I knew the Lord would not let any perish through man's unbelief and sinful carelessness; but my unfaithfulness remained the same. Every pulse and nerve throbbed with pain; I could see nothing but that I might have spoken for the blessed Master whose tender love encompassed me continually, and I did not.

My heart was desolate, and made its cry in helplessness for comfort from Him who could alone console. "Lord, help me," was all my prayer. Intent to wait *this* day at least on the Lord, and follow Him, I tarried vainly for the chairman I had engaged; I

went to his stand, but he had not arrived. One other man only was there, for it was an unusually early hour. He offered me his chair; I told him I must wait, as I had engaged one. A little time elapsed, the man civilly suggested that I should now engage him, and I consented, and he went the route I indicated.

We had to pass the end of the road, whence the high scaffold around the buildings was visible. He said,

"There 's been a terrible business there this morning, ma'am."

"Yes, yes, I know," I replied hastily, dreading to hear the awful details.

"Poor fellow!" persisted the man, "he did not think his end would be so soon when he went out to his work this morning."

"Did you know him?" I enquired eagerly."

"Yes, I think I did, too," said the man.

"Was he fit to die?" I summoned courage to ask, and I gasped for the reply.

The man stopped, and turning to me with solemnity replied,

"He was."

Oh the bright light in the cloud! I believed him. The shadow of my sorrow rolled away, and a deep realized sense of God's unfailing love came on my soul.

"Lord, help me!" Yea, He had laid help on Him that is mighty. One chairman had been kept back, and the other sent, who should lift the horrible suspense from my mind. The Lord had taken away the sin, and the chastening had left me with a heart more bent on doing His will and watching where He might need me.

"Why do you think he was fit to die?" I could now say, no longer shrinking from the subject.

"Because, ma'am, he was a changed man."

"How was he changed?"

"One evening going home from work he heard Mr. Guinness preach. It threw him into great trouble; he felt his sins, and told me after that he knew them pardoned. Once he swore and lived like others, but then he changed. I don't know all about it; I only

know he was an altered man. I did not live near him then."

"He was young." I asked, "Has he left parents?"

"I don't know; I think *not*. He had a wife and two or three little children."

My heart grew stronger.

"Can you tell me where they live?"

"Surely I can," replied the man; "it is in the same alley as myself, and I pass their door every day to my stand."

"Take me there at once," I said.

"That I will," replied the man heartily, brushing away the tears from his eyes, "and God bless you for going."

I prayed as I went along for the Lord to prepare the way before me. Suddenly there came to my mind various articles which I ought to take with me, so I returned to a shop at a little distance in an opposite direction. Shopping, always tedious, seemed more than ever so this day; so many articles were recommended that I did not enquire for, and so many presented that I did not need. I felt impatient, but checked

myself; for I remembered that I had asked the Lord to direct *all* my steps, and that *He* could quicken the movements of the tedious shopkeepers. Yes, the Lord could, but He did not. On looking at my watch I found I had been half-an-hour there in procuring what might have been obtained in ten minutes.

We went to the alley. A crowd lingered round the house indicated as the one I sought. I left the chair at the end of the street, and making my way through the crowd ascended the few broken steps to the door, and asked permission to enter. The alley was deluged with water; the threshold streamed, so did the passage and the kitchen; and on the wet stones in the midst was a scene of woe never to be obliterated from my memory.

The widow sat on the ground, in the first grief that only feels *death* is there. At her breast was a weak, ailing infant, crying for the nourishment it sought in vain. A little girl sat close by her mother sobbing, and an older boy, more conscious of his loss, weep-

ing bitterly. The kind neighbours wept. All had tears but the one it concerned the most.

"It is very wet for you, ma'am," said one of the neighbours, as she fetched me a piece of carpet from her own house; adding, "They have only just carried the poor body through the house, and this is why you see so much water."

The mournful significance of this remark revealed my Father's care. The half hour I thought "wasted" had saved me from the sight which would have unfitted me for service. He had sent me to the living, not to the dead. I spoke to the stricken woman of her loss; but she heeded me not. I said a few words to the crowd, and asked them to let me close the door; the neighbours went out, and we two sat alone with God. He only could touch that paralyzed heart. I sat with her long in silent prayer. At last I took her hand, and said,

"You remember Jesus, when He was on earth, went among the broken-hearted. He is in heaven. He has sent me with a mes-

sage to you. It is a promise through your husband to you: 'Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let your widows trust in *Me*.'"

The poor woman started, and the infant screamed; but she heeded it not. I went on to say, "God will provide. He has sent you such things as you will find needful to-day: He will care for you."

No answer, no movement, until I rose and placed what I had brought in the cupboard. Then her eyes followed me, her lip trembled, and those blessed tears that keep the heart from breaking fell fast upon the child's pale face. The wail of the infant had not reached the mother's heart; God's message had. The little ones were clasped to her breast. It was enough.

"He was such a kind husband," she said brokenly. "Directly he was changed, he began to pray for me and with me. Hours after his work, when I was sleeping, I would wake and hear him praying down here."

All this was sweet to my soul; and though she had not the happy assurance of

her husband, yet his words and example had been greatly blessed to her. I persuaded her to come to my lodgings sometimes in the evening; and though at first she shrank from quitting her desolate home, yet I saw it needful for her; and as a neighbour cared for the children, I was thankful that she overcame her disinclination and came. It was blessed to watch the Lord in this as in all His dealings. Soon after the funeral she left for a cottage in the country, which a kind friend had provided for her, and I was led elsewhere. I have related these details to show forth His praise to those who wait on Him.

We know not the end of the small things the Lord permits us to do for Him; but if it *is* for Him it will be seen, if we have not despised it. When Hanani visited his brother at the palace of Shushan, and described the desolation of Jerusalem, he knew not that he was the appointed messenger to lay its restoration on the heart of Nehemiah, still less that he would be joint-ruler there. Certainly an officer of the royal household

did not appear the most suitable person to rebuild the city.

Sorrow of heart for the reproach and affliction of his people cast a cloud on the brow of Nehemiah. It was but the shadow of the finger of the Lord God, under whose wings he had come to trust, preparing the way for his journey.

To erect the gates which had been burnt with fire, and to rebuild the ruined walls, was but a part of the work. It was a "great work," and the king's cup-bearer *knew* it as such, and with every step he took he prayed to the God of heaven.

The servant knew he had to do with the living God, who aforetime had led His people in the day by a cloudy pillar, and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go. This God was *his* God; Nehemiah's God is our God.

In His light he gathered materials for his labours; he organized his fellow-workers; he appointed the service of the temple. It was not in his own strength that he boldly

testified against the broken laws of his God, and reproved evil; neither was it in leaning to his own understanding that he detected the devices of his enemies to alarm when they could not allure him, and kept him undaunted amid the stratagems to make him cease the work to which God had called him.

Money and willing workers could not meet all his necessities. Wisdom and discretion marked all his steps, and showed that he trusted not in an arm of flesh, but in the strength of Israel.

The faithful follower will ever be a conscious or unconscious witness for the Master he serves; and so it was with Nehemiah. "When his enemies *heard* of the re-building of the walls, and the heathen who were about *saw* these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: they perceived that the work was of God."

If ever there was a day when the labourer of the Lord should work with one hand, and with the other hold a weapon, it is now. "Watch and pray" is our watchword.

For lack of spiritual understanding "the strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish," so that we are not able to build the wall. (Nehemiah iv. 9.)

Sanballat is within the city, and if he by flattery cannot draw aside the servant of Jesus into fellowship and league with him, then Tobiah will work yet more insidiously, or seek to hinder by intimidating those whose only hope should be, the *Lord* hath need of me.

If your counsels are from God, your work will be *seen* to be of Him. Nehemiah had but the covenant of works, we have the covenant of grace. The law of God and the love of God remain unalterable; and the broken law and stream of love's redemption go side by side.

Is your place, dear reader, in the sight of men, recognized in the great harvest-field as sent of God?

You bear the burden and heat of the day? The greater your need to realize continually the sanctuary of His presence who has

called you, for "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

Some of the details will seem *very* small, but despise them not if *God* is in them. From Him you will receive the wisdom that cometh from above only. It will nerve you for conflict, enlighten your eyes to maintain a single-eyed service, and keep your heart in peace, for *you* know not which is more important. Go! speak of Jesus with a fervent heart, warmed with the contemplation of His beauty, and tender from the sight of His minute care for you. *Live* in the power of the Spirit, and you will magnetize the loiterer by your side, rouse the dull energies of your slumbering brethren, and set in motion numberless engines to carry out your heart's desire for the glory of Him you serve.

Arise and follow Jesus. Grieve not that blessed One by standing afar off, or by waiting for what you think a "great work," and despising the day of small things; for you know not what you do.

The source of the Thames is to be found

in a little flowery brake on the hill-side, unseen if unsought. When the merchant looks in proud satisfaction on the river, on whose broad bosom his richly freighted vessels are borne, he knows nothing of the silver brooklet, nor cares whence that great body of waters flowed. But — "The Lord had need of it."

CHAPTER II.

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH.

"The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."—JOHN xiv. 17.

IT is not marvellous that the enemies of Christ should ignore the Holy Spirit who came to reveal Him; but it is amazing that those who are professedly of the Church of Christ, and who, if *really* belonging to it, are temples of the Holy Ghost, should testify so little of the living God.

A mere verbal recognition of the office of the Comforter costs nothing; a belief in revelation would be considered incomplete with-

out it; but it is one thing to say, "the Holy Ghost which is given us," and quite another to realize an habitual dependence on Him. He does not take up His abode in the heart as a doctrine, but as the life of the new creature. He is there to manifest the Father and the Son, to enlighten the understanding of the ignorant, to make known the hope of our calling; "and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power."

When Jesus prepared the hearts of His disciples for the loss of His personal presence, He consoled them with the promise of the "Comforter," who should bring to their remembrance all things that He had said unto them, and should abide with them for ever.

In the power of this invisible, but no less real, person of the Godhead, greater works were to be accomplished than had yet been seen, for Jesus had declared, "He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall

he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to the Father."

The coming of the Holy Ghost was the fruit of the sacrifice of the Son of God. As truly as we receive justification through the death of the Redeemer, so cometh sanctification through the Spirit by His life and intercession. The Comforter came to reveal the great salvation wrought for us in the finished work of Christ. "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you." Was then the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost merely an exhibition of His power? Did He reveal Jesus to those assembled in His name at Jerusalem, and did He direct, and control, and teach the early church,—and has He forsaken His church to-day? Nay; hath not God said, "He shall abide with you *for ever*." And again, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them." Why then are there so few evidences of His almighty presence? Why are there no mighty works done here? "*Because* of their unbelief."

Who can convince of sin? (John xvi. 8.) Who can give assurance and peace? (1 John iv. 13.) Who indites the prayer in the heart where He dwelleth? (Rom. viii. 26.) If it is the office of the Holy Spirit to take of the things of Jesus and show them unto us, then it is plain that an intellectual knowledge of salvation is of no avail without Him. We are enjoined to be "led of the Spirit:" how shall we obey the precept if we never seek to realize Him in practice? (Rom. iv. 16.)

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil; and when the forty days were accomplished, and the prince of this world found nothing in Him, the sinless Saviour returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee; being glorified of all. Stephen, being "full of the Holy Ghost, looked *up* steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." It was in beholding Him who had prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," that the first martyr could follow in the footsteps of the Master, and pray with his

dying breath, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." (Acts vii. 55.) Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, looked *down* on the child of evil, and reproved the works of darkness. (Acts. xiii. 10.) When the little company met in concert to seek the blessing of the Lord on their teaching, the very building was shaken by the power of the Spirit, and they went forth filled with the Holy Ghost, and spoke the word of God with boldness. When Philip was preaching at Samaria with great acceptance, many signs and wonders being seen, it did not appear clear to the natural understanding why he should be taken from his successful labour to "Gaza, which is desert," to preach Jesus to one solitary man. But the Spirit had commanded, and he obeyed.

It seemed "good" in the sight of Joshua to receive the Gibeonites, but it was not so. He asked not counsel of the Lord, and the false ambassadors triumphed in their deceit. Thus Israel had enemies inside the camp, although but hewers of wood and drawers of water. "This is the work of God, that ye

believe on Him whom He hath sent." "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." (John vii. 38, 39.) If He has promised to lead us, shall we not trust ourselves to His guidance? And being in the light, we shall see light, and the testing times of hope, and faith, and patience, shall bring forth fruit.

"The simple (or foolish man) believeth every word; but the prudent looketh well to his going." (Prov. xiv. 15.) It is by the pride and unbelief of the carnal nature that our spiritual senses are dulled. The mariner will judge from the appearance of the sky that a storm is pending; he will make for the haven, look well to his sails and cordage, and throw overboard his freight, rather than risk the loss of his ship and the precious lives. Then shall I not watch for indications of my way from Him who knoweth the way

that I take, and has said, "*I* will direct your paths"? Who does not remember some excursion which we hoped to enjoy, but which was dependent on fine weather: how often we watched the indications of the wind and sky. How warily the merchant consigns his goods to a foreign market. How carefully the money-making man examines the prospects of the funded interests. Their hours of careful, patient watchfulness are praised as displaying needful foresight and prudence; but when the same watchfulness is applied to spiritual and eternal things it is called madness and fanaticism. Yet the heavenly "merchandise is better than silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold."

Will God give light on the Word, its precepts, and its commands, and will He withhold the guidance and power for our daily walk? Is it presumption to take Him at His word, and to believe that we can do nothing acceptable to God without His Son? Nay, is it not rather presumption to walk in the vain imaginations of the heart, in a path that no man knoweth?

Humility does not consist in a reiteration of our sins, or in bemoaning the bondage from which Jesus Christ died to deliver us. The truest humility is the faith of the little child. Conscious of its helplessness and ignorance, it leans confidingly on the father's breast, and watches for a sign of his will; so, with his hand clasped within the strong one of love, should the child of God trust in the wisdom of Him, to whom darkness and light are both alike. If the Holy Spirit witnesseth with our spirit that we are the children of God, shall He not witness with our spirit when we have done His will? Yea, surely! for God is a rewarder of them that *diligently* seek Him.

We hear Christians praying daily for help to understand the word of God which they read, thus acknowledging their need of the power of the Holy Spirit whereby we receive the truths of revelation, yet dishonouring Him by unwatchfulness as to the experimental teaching of daily life, as if this were a thing apart and not the branches springing from the root. "If we live in the Spirit, let

us also walk in the Spirit." How often is He invoked, yet never watched for; how often are pleasures sought and enjoyed in which He can have no share; thus neglected and grieved, His voice of love is heard less frequently; His warnings are disregarded; the upbraiding of His holy jealousy is stifled; until the whisper of remonstrance is perceived no more, and the Spirit, well-nigh quenched, is remembered only when the chastening hand of the Father reminds us of our loss.

A friend with whom I took "sweet counsel" told me that he went to the south for the benefit of his failing health. The new and lovely scenes in which he sojourned, and the void from the lack of the service which had over-fully occupied him in his own land, tended to enervate the life of faith within him, and he ceased to remember that to "walk before God" was the service most acceptable to his Master.

He was shut out from his old Christian companionship, yet not more shut in with Christ. And though his physical health was restored, his soul fell into a careless, luke-

warm state. He had been resting more in his Master's work than in his Master's love. But the Lord loved him, and would not let his wandering child remain in the path of slothfulness. He became depressed and sad; and while mourning his backsliding state, there came to his mind a young Englishman of his own age, who for many weeks had occupied apartments in the same house with him. He had often passed him on the staircase and in the street, but the characteristic pride and reserve of my friend kept him aloof from the stranger. Content to accept the boon of health as the result of his sojourn in a foreign land, he sought not to inquire, "What wouldst Thou have me to do?" or to ask if the Lord had need of him.

He dwelt among a strange people, but were there none of his own tongue to whom he could speak of the unsearchable riches of Christ? The sweet persuasion of the blessed Spirit, acting on his awakening soul, led him to desire to seek the acquaintance of his neighbour. This was rendered the more

difficult, because he was conscious that he had shunned rather than sought his society. But the time of his departure drew near. Days passed; he lacked energy to follow his conviction; and when an opportunity offered, he lacked courage to take advantage of it. Each evening brought a heavy burden of broken resolutions and sorrowful regrets.

One night he dared not lie down to sleep; he was conscious that he had striven against the whisper in his slothful heart aroused by the love of Him "who speaketh once; yea, twice; yet man perceiveth it not." Though it was near upon midnight, he wrote a hurried note to the young man, entreating him to come to him immediately. The stranger, wondering at the urgency of the request, obeyed the summons. Great was his amazement to find that the gentleman, who had passed him daily for weeks without a sign of courtesy, was in deep concern to know the state of his soul!

He was startled by the heartfelt anguish of my friend, unconscious of the source from whence it sprang; and though prepared

to resent what seemed an untimely interference in his personal affairs, he listened to him. From the broken heart of God's dear servant went forth the cry that brought a blessing down.

The two young men knelt side by side, and it was morning before they separated. And then, oh, how sweet was the reward! The young Englishman blessed the hand which had been so tardy in its office of ministering love, and confessed that, had the interview been delayed one hour, he would have entered on a path of sin and folly of which he could not think without a shudder.

Thus, in all service the Lord works also upon the instrument, and, in His loving-kindness and tender mercy, often woos back the wandering soul with a blessing.

> "Love, deep, divine, unsearchable,
> Love is the binding cord,
> That, hid beneath the chastening,
> Twines round the saints of God."

It will preserve from self-dependence, and carnal reasoning, to remember that the work

of sanctification, begun by the Holy Spirit in the soul, cannot be completed by man himself. It will on the other hand uphold the sinking heart, if he bear in mind that almighty power and wisdom are engaged in his behalf. "I, even I, am He that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker?" (Isa. li. 12.) "In God have I put my trust; I will not be afraid what man can do unto me." (Psa. lvi. 11.)

He in whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind, will He not guard the life He has given, and deliver His saints to-day? (Acts xxiii. 21.)

If we lightly esteem His presence, and cease to guard it from opposing influences, He will withdraw His smile. If we have our treasure in heaven, our thoughts will be there, and the Holy Spirit will reveal deeper things: but if the love of the world be admitted, and sloth enervate the life of faith,

He cannot reveal anything which will not sting and wound.

A man of God, a pastor in one of the Swiss cantons, was deeply interested in a prisoner condemned to death for a capital offence. Every day that visitors were admitted to the prison he was allowed to pass an hour in the condemned cell. There was no visible result, but patiently and hopefully he still read the Word of God, and prayed with the prisoner, setting before him the offers of eternal life in terms of tender persuasion.

The day of execution drew near; only one day remained—Sunday. He could not account for the strange disinclination to the service he had hitherto diligently fulfilled. The hour had struck which on other days had found him at the gate of the prison, and yet he still lingered in his house. He upbraided himself with supineness in losing this last opportunity of speaking to and reading with the prisoner; and though the impression deepened in his mind that God willed not that he should go, he took his

hat; but ere he crossed the threshold of his house, a voice warned him—"Go not." The sweet and solemn warning caused him to tarry. In a conflict of feeling he passed the hour for admittance; but still fearful of neglecting a duty, he rushed to the prison, believing that, under such circumstances, the rule as to time would not be strictly enforced. But ere he reached the prison-door, a power he could not resist "suffered him not," and he returned to his closet, assured that God *could* work without him, and that, in returning, he obeyed the will of Him whom he desired to serve.

The prisoner had determined to make one desperate effort to escape. The visits of the faithful pastor were between three and four o'clock; the criminal had resolved, on his entrance this day, to spring on him, smite him dead, and escape.

The hour struck, and the servant of God came not; the hand of love was guarding him for future usefulness. The unhappy prisoner grew wild with disappointment, and he yelled in rage. The jailer, hearing an

unusual noise, entered the cell abruptly; the prisoner, supposing him to be his expected visitor, sprang with the strength of despair upon his victim, and smote him on the head with his fetters. He fell dead, while the murderer rushed to the outer door, attempting to escape, and only after a fierce struggle was captured. Before his execution he confessed that he had murdered the jailer in mistake for his kind and pitiful visitor.

O ye who think that the actings of grace exist in imagination, or satisfy yourselves that the care of the living God over His saints is a "remarkable coincidence," grieve not the Holy Spirit, but consider His ways. If ye be born of the Spirit, "yield yourselves servants to obey;" and "fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in Him."

CHAPTER III.

THE BLESSED POOR.

"He lifted up His eyes upon His disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of heaven."—LUKE vi. 20.

MONEY is a representative of many things, but money is not the tithe of all that we possess. There is much to be cast into the treasury of the Lord besides the gold and silver. "Give alms of such things as ye *have*."

Are you yourself poor and needy? Then "blessed are ye poor!" The empty hands outstretched to the God of the whole earth, and the open mouth of expectation, are acceptable to Him; for "God is able to make all grace

abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." (2 Cor. ix. 8.)

Often I hear Christians bemoaning their inability to "serve the Lord." Either He has not given them the amount of gold and silver they think needful for the purpose which they desire, or they are feeble in body, or old, or sick, or unfavourably situated as to family connections, so that when they speak of serving the Lord it is with sorrowful regrets.

If gold and silver are to be the only tithe, there will still be a lack; for then those who have them not are exempt from the offering which the willing heart delights to lay upon the altar of God's exceeding love.

The widow's mite was counted for more than the abundance of the rich and the costly gifts in the temple, for God looketh on the heart. Who shall say, "I have nothing to give; I have no service for the Lord"? Look well as to what God has given you, and then you will find a treasury in heaven from which you may draw without limitation, for

with the unspeakable gift of God's dear Son, He has promised freely to give us all things.

The prayer of faith is safe for exchange. The coin of the heavenly realms bears on it, "The Lord will provide," with the name and superscription of the King of kings. It never decreases in value; it is ever new, and bright, and precious; it enriches the giver and receiver; it will send forth labourers to the wide harvest-field, strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees, as well as supply the wants of the saints, and is "abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;" and when this heavenly commerce declines prosperity fails.

Who are the poor? All in need. Not only the homeless wanderer, the forlorn outcast, the friendless orphan, the ignorant, the destitute. Those whom God has raised up to care for them; many into whose hearts He has shed His Spirit, and given them to preach the gospel, are themselves among the poor, though rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom. Many in high places are crying for patience and faithfulness; many a teacher

is asking for humility and faith; many a tempted one praying for strength to stand; many an oppressed one maligned and defamed. Behold, the poor and needy are everywhere!

The lessons taught us experimentally are best remembered. I have been very slow in learning the privilege of bearing the mark of God's special care in His chastening love; but He has taught me (blessed be His name!) it was good for me to have been afflicted. To be shut out from the outer world is not to be shut out from service. The temptations which are found with health and strength, and the fair world without, are not the only ones; nor are you insured from the temptations from within. Nay, the seasons which afford rich experiences of the love and power of the Lord are continually the battle-field of covetous desires, murmurings, and regrets.

One of those long twilight evenings, which so often press upon the sick and lonely, found me, as they often did, weak and weary, trying to "be still," and rest on Him

whose wisdom ordained it. Satan took advantage of my weariness, and injected the thought that never more would my weak hand convey to others the messages of mercy; that never more would my faltering tongue proclaim my Saviour's grace; that all ministry for me was over, and there was no room for me on this wide field, save to suffer and to die.

A pang shot through my heart, and my desponding spirit bent beneath the dart of the enemy. But we are not ignorant of his devices, and his Conqueror was there ready to defend His weak one.

The Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard against my foe: "All power is given unto Me,"—and I was comforted. I saw that the same loving Master who had blessed the work of this feeble hand could bless it still, even if I could write no more. It was not *my* work, but His work. It was not health or strength I had given Him (and He taketh not pleasure in the strength of a horse): He had blessed what His own love had constrained me to offer.

With my own utter worthlessness, I contrasted the exceeding grace of my heavenly King, and found, what then I always find, peace and blessing. And so I prayed, "Take up, I pray Thee, some words I have written for Thee, that Thou hast blessed. Bless them anew; for the power is not in my words, but in thy Spirit." I had a firm conviction that He would fulfil my petition, and I lay back upon my pillow and praised Him for what I was *assured* He would grant.

A heavy storm that had long hung above the hills came sweeping over my dwelling. The hoarse voice of the wind, as it roughly bent the branches of the old trees which partly shadowed the window, left all more gloomy than before; but it had no power to sadden me. My heart was resting on Him whom winds and waves obey.

Two days afterwards I received a letter from a dear friend in the East of London, bringing, as her letters ever do, a blessing with it. Unconsciously, she had been commissioned by the Lord to bear to my soul

the message of His faithfulness and tender care. The storm that swept above me was the chariot of *His* power who saith, "While they are yet speaking I will hear."

On that stormy evening, in the East of London, a prayer-meeting had been appointed in a room hired for various purposes; and when my friend reached it, the rain had begun to fall. She found that she had arrived too early, and that the hall was still occupied by a gathering of infidels. When she discovered the nature of the meeting, she began to retrace her steps, preferring the violence of the elements without to the appalling scene within. But the Lord had need of her. The storm now beat furiously along the street, and the outer doorway presented no shelter. When she would have faced its fury, friendly hands drew her back into the hall; others, like herself, were waiting for that meeting to close.

Most reluctantly she entered, and found herself in the midst of an assembly of sinners, met to prove God's grace a fable, and the Word of God a lie! Strong working

men were there, artizans of various crafts, men of cold, hard countenance, on which care, and thought, and sin, had left deep scars—men who, by scorners like themselves, are called in the hackneyed phraseology of the world, "*earnest* men."

The fallacious reasoning of man's deceitful heart strives to give a glitter to the things of darkness; and thus, however glaring the error, however pernicious the doctrine, men shelter themselves and others under a pretended reverence for earnestness. Our lecture-halls teem with such men, who are consciously and unconsciously treading under foot the precious sacrifice of the Son of God. Satan is earnest, and his subjects are in earnest; but when they stand before the Judge of all the earth, the plea that they were verily *in earnest* will not save them. Hell will abound with earnest men.

My friend told me that she timidly entered the assembly. It was impossible to describe her feelings; the very atmosphere seemed replete with evil. Lifting up her soul to the Lord to render her deaf to the unholy

language, she made her way to the upper part of the hall, where she saw one solitary woman driven like herself from the doorway for shelter. On approaching her, she found her to be a Christian woman of whom she had been in search, and she sat herself beside her. The power of the prince of darkness was not unchecked in this assembly, any more than in my lonely room. And Christian men who had entered uplifted the banner in His name who came to seek and to save.

Angry passions now swayed the infidels, and their opponents, like soldiers for a moment bewildered by the roar of cannon, paused. There was silence. Had the powers of evil pre-eminence?

The silence was broken by a clear, manly voice at the extreme end of the hall breaking forth in a cheerful song—

"Sow ye beside all waters,
Where the dew of heaven may fall:
Ye shall reap, if ye be not weary,
For the Spirit breathes o'er all.

"Sow, though the thorns may wound thee,—
One wore the thorns for thee;
And though the cold world scorn thee,
Patient and hopeful be.

"Sow ye beside all waters,
With a blessing and a prayer;
Name Him whose hand upholds thee,
And sow thou everywhere."

Voice after voice took up the strain, and told how many more of the warriors of the cross had gathered there against the enemy. And weary hearts took courage.

My dear friend knew how it would cheer my heart and gladden my silent hours, to know that the first-fruits of my pen, laid on the altar of my God, should have been made a battle-song for the faithful—at the same time teaching my hands to war and my fingers to fight, and calling forth from my own soul the shout of "Victory! victory! through the blood of the Lamb!"

Service and ministry are so connected in the minds of many with external form, that nothing appears to them as ministry, unless in accredited detail and order. The things of the Spirit can only be seen in the Spirit: and if worship is to be offered in spirit and in truth, so also must service be; and this I began more fully to perceive a few days after the incident I have related.

On reading *The Revival,* I was specially drawn to an account of a work in London. The faithful servant of the Lord who had written the report stated the great need of funds to meet the necessities of the poor, amongst whom it was his joy to preach the gospel of Christ. In the impulse of my heart, I longed to send him gold without measure; but I reasoned, that had God willed I should have gold to give, He would have given me gold; and it was as easy for Him to give me gold as silver. I opened my purse, not to see what I could spare, but how much *was mine* to give. I found that all I could offer was silver, and a sum so small, that Satan suggested that it was useless to send half-a-crown.

Should I withhold it because it was so little? Nay! The barley loaves in the hands of Jesus fed a multitude. From whom should I withhold it? From Mr.——? From the *poor?* Nay! From the Lord!

Every scruple vanished. I placed it before Him for His blessing, and pleaded for something better than gold to send with it. A

text came so full of food and refreshment for myself, that I hesitated if it could possibly be intended for another; but after waiting none other came. I wrote it as clearly as my weak hand could trace it, and enclosed it with the money to Mr. ——; and then I specially laid his need before the Lord, praying for pounds, not shillings, this very evening to be sent him, and for special blessing on the text. And He to whom belong the gold and silver, who owns the cattle on a thousand hills and the sparrow on the housetop, heard my prayer. I had an immediate consciousness that it was granted, and I praised therefore.

Could I have written a cheque, or have enclosed a bank-bill, it is possible that after I had done it, I should have thought no more of the matter: as it was, the exercise of faith drew me nearer to realizing that I had to do with a living God, whose care is over all His works. My heart filled with grateful joy, for I perceived a wider sphere of service and ministry than had ever before met my view.

Three months passed away. The circumstances had faded from my memory. One morning the post brought me a pamphlet; and as I was much engaged, it lay for several days on my table unopened. To look at it, I feared, would hinder me in my work. But a thought flashed through my mind that perhaps the Lord had sent, as He often does, some message of love in it; and if so, that would help, not hinder me. I opened it prayerfully. It was the report of the work which had so much interested me, forwarded by an unknown hand. I turned the pages, not to certify if my mite had been received, for I had not sent my name, but to know how the work prospered that had been so blessed to myself, and for which I had pleaded.

On turning the leaves, my eye caught a text. This text, so full of treasures to my own heart, had gone, in the power and light of the Spirit, and under peculiar circumstances of trial had blessed him to whom I had sent it. Furthermore, on the evening of the same day the Lord put into the mind of one in whose spiritual welfare I was con-

cerned to send for the work the gold which I lacked; and there followed other donations, which rejoiced my heart. And it was clear that the cheque had been remitted that night, as it reached London the following morning.

We are continually sowing in thought, word, and work. "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Lord, let me feel that Thou art ever nigh me,
And ruling all in love;
That no good thing Thy wisdom will deny me,
Thy tenderness to prove.

Thy blessed voice the stormy wind obeyeth,
And Thy behest fulfils;
Thy word the tempest wild within allayeth,
And each foreboding stills.

Keep me still close to Thee, O Lord; Thou knowest
Thou art my hope and rest;
And trustful let me tread the path Thou showest,
Still leaning on Thy breast.

Thou hast been Home and Friend in deserts lonely,
And Thou wilt be again.
Oh, let me seek Thy smile, my Jesus only,
And not the praise of men.

CHAPTER IV.

PRECIOUS FRUIT.

"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."—HEB. x. 35, 36.

WE err presumptuously in claiming a promise when we have neglected the precept; but we rob the Lord of praise and glory in following the precept, and disbelieving the promise. He has said, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days." Here the heart-stirring command to labour is coupled with the promise of a sure reward: so closely are they joined together for the believer's encouragement, that they can only be severed by his unbelief. The

promise is often limited to evangelists, as the "cheerful giver" is restricted to the distributor to the poor. "He that winneth souls is wise," and "he that hath pity upon the poor lendeth to the Lord;" but nowhere is it set forth, that to preach the gospel to others, or to distribute to the necessitous, is the end for which we have been translated out of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

The vessels of the sanctuary must be rendered meet for spiritual service; and the perfecting of them is often wrought out by what seems to our short-sighted vision as unsuccessful labour. "Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with Me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve Me." (Ps. ci. 6.) When the Lord, in answer to our prayers for grace, is cultivating our faith, patience, and meekness, we rebel, because we cannot behold with our outward senses that which we have committed to Him in hope. The insult, that God is not faithful to His promise, is insinuated by the father of lies, and

received into the natural heart of unbelief. Virtually we say, "According to His command we *have* cast our bread upon the waters, but it is lost!" As if anything could be lost that faith had committed to the eternal God. Where there is a work of faith, there must be precious fruit. That over which you rejoiced, and for which you made many an untold sacrifice, brought forth "nothing but leaves;" and that over which you watched through nights of weeping, and hopelessly exclaimed, "It was all in vain!" may not have been "in vain." The bread-corn, scattered in feebleness, has not been devoured by the fowls of the air, as you say: it has fallen into the cleft of a wounded heart, too proud to show you it can feel. It will germinate slowly and quietly, where no eye but God's will watch it striving for light. We ask to see in a week the growth of a cedar or a palm; we look for fruit in the seed-time; and for summer flowers when only the spring winds are rising, and water-floods overflowing. "Hope in God." The crowning of labour is not according to

the natural energy of the sower, but according to the wisdom of the Lord of the harvest. And that harvest is sometimes reaped only in the soul of the patient husbandman; and a fair and flourishing field, which the sower will never behold on earth, is claimed in future days by another who enters into his labours.

God works in silence. Nature's processes, by which He teaches us of the invisible things by things which *are* seen, are almost imperceptible in their progress. Light is silent. The seed germinates, and none can tell where it lies. (John iii. 7, 8.) The corn ripens silently; spring steals over the land silently; but summer—smiling harbinger of precious fruit!—tells at last the patient labourer that he has not waited in vain. The narrow path runs through a wide field. Little deeds of kindness, words of love, of warning, of faithful rebuke, and tender sympathy, cast forth by a soul in union with Christ, *is* bread upon the waters that shall be found after many days.

It is not difficult to glory in infirmities,

when we are permitted to see that thus the power of Christ may rest upon us. I was desirous of furnishing some large-type reference Bibles to some of my poor friends in a place I was leaving; especially I needed one for a youth who was recently converted, whose failing sight could only discern the largest and clearest print. I found Bibles of this description more expensive than I expected, and I waited on the Lord for the means of procuring them. Day after day passed; I was much exercised in regard to leaving the place; but this waiting-time brought forth blessing.

A day had closed in conflict and sadness, so that the great adversary blinded my eyes to my heavenly portion. "In the world ye shall have tribulation;" "in *Me* ye shall have peace." The wily accuser did not attack my fair inheritance, but set before me my vileness as a child of God—the grace I had sinned against, the opportunities of usefulness I had lost, ending with the Bibles for which I had made no exertion, and which it was now needless to procure, as I

must proceed on my journey. Like Eve, I listened to the tempter. I believed the lie, and was afraid.

It seemed quite clear to me that I had never loved the Lord, never served Him or witnessed for Him; but after a time came the sweet assurance that He loved me all the same. Still I dwelt on His love to me and my ingratitude to Him. The conflict was longer than the detail I have briefly given; but the blood of the Lamb slain was my shelter and safety at last. Long I wept over my uselessness, until He gave me strength to cry to *Him:* "Spare me until to-morrow, Lord, and if thy blessing has never yet fallen on any service for thee, life is not over!—bless me now!"

I lay down and slept a long deep sleep, and was awakened by a registered letter being brought to me, requiring my signature. The handwriting was unfamiliar to me, and the letter bore no name. As I read, my heart burst forth in praise; line after line seemed written to meet the need known only to Him whose tender care is over all His works.

It told me of help and blessing received through books I had written on this same battle-field. The gold enclosed I was requested to use for any service of the Lord I might at that time require. The remainder of the letter is traced on my heart, though unrecorded here; but it closes thus, "and for you, I pray that you may be kept very, *very* humble."

I know not if I shall look on the face of the writer until we meet on the morning without clouds, when the bread cast upon the waters will be found after many days.

The prayer of faith had won for me this trial; and even while the Holy Ghost was inditing the prayer, the command had gone forth. But "He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath He hid His face from him; but when he cried unto Him, He heard." (Psa. xxii. 24.)

The sympathy, and encouragement to labour, again sent me on my way rejoicing. Thus the hand of a stranger was directed to supply the Bibles, the need of which I had

been permitted to discover, and was also used to open to me anew the hidden riches which abound in secret places, that I might realize again the faithfulness of Him who had called me by name,—that He was indeed my God, and that I was His servant.

"He that observeth the wind shall not sow, and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." The ways and means the Lord ordains for the accomplishment of His work differ with the varieties of His instruments, and the peculiarities of their employments. To address the same question to every one, to propound the same doctrine, and set forth the same argument on every occasion, is simply a negligent systematic occupation, which can never satisfy a heart drawing its supplies fresh from the fountain of living water. One led of the Spirit will be counted a fool for doing what seems in opposition to received methods of dealing with certain sections of error; but "hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

An English family resided for the summer in one of the Catholic cantons of Switzer-

land. The lady's maid was a witness for her heavenly Master. She visited the poor in the neighbourhood, and with the permission of her mistress cared for their necessities, while distributing the tracts and books which she had herself procured. In one of the houses lived a single woman, known as the most bigoted Romanist in the village. The Englishwoman could not approach her, until one day she found her very ill in bed, with no one to help her. She then did what she could for her, and from day to day brought her nourishment suitable for her state. The sick woman received the dinners and ridiculed the donor, saying that she did not wish to lose the good food, and if she brought any tracts or *good* books she would accept all, and when she was well again she would make a *feu de joie* of them.

No tracts came, but the food never failed. One day the servant carried with her one of the portions of Scripture, now flying like messages of mercy through the length and breadth of the land. It was the Gospel of

St. John. The Frenchwoman made no objection to it, but, showing it to a neighbour, she laughed at the simplicity of the giver, and put it aside as the first supply for her *feu de joie.*

The woman grew worse, and was confined entirely to her bed. The hours hung heavily without any of her ordinary occupations.

At last in utter weariness she turned to the only book unread. She argued with herself—"This cannot be a bad book, though it comes from a Protestant; portions of it are in the mass. If some parts are good, all may be good. I do not think it will do me harm." She began it, and became intensely interested in it; and then when she had reached the last chapter, she re-read it, and greatly desired more.

No other book was offered her, no tract came, no word was spoken to her on the subject of her errors, or of the truth which the book contained. At length she asked for another portion, and finally for the whole Testament. She made no observation and put no questions to her visitor, but on her

blindness arose the light of the Sun of Righteousness, and Jesus could not be hid.

Then the priest came and asked why she did not go to mass now that she was better. She replied firmly, she could never hear the mass again. "I cannot say," she added, "that I have a new religion; for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it: no one has ever spoken to me on the subject, but I see what I never saw before, and I can no longer go to mass."

The priest applied to the bishop of the diocese, who was then in the neighbourhood. He sent his vicar, a learned and influential controversialist, to visit her. After holding long conversation with her, he reported that it was in vain to seek to draw her back to the true church, for to every argument she replied only in the words of Scripture.

The persecution raised against this converted woman was such, that had she been without a home no one would have dared to give her shelter under their roof. By one of those blessed providential dealings of our heavenly Father, she had no lodging to seek.

In some of the small tenements in Switzerland the proprietor has a right, in disposing of his house, to retain one room for the life of one member of his family. This had been the case here: her father had arranged and secured this room for her, of which no one could dispossess her, and the peaceful possession of this quiet chamber was continually the subject of her praise and thankfulness. The Englishwoman ministered to her while she was there. The emancipated Romanist has never lacked—never will, for her hope is in God. The bread upon the waters is *found.*

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Heb. xi. 1.) "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Faith must not be confounded with vain imaginations of the natural heart, which expects at a certain season certain results. To do the will of God is to be assured of the promise; "for yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

Faith has its many phases, but it is the

same faith. The rainbow has varied colours in its zone, but it is the same light. Faith may look upward rejoicing; she may fold her hands in patient waiting; she may work, fearing nothing; she may suffer silently; but it is faith still. Its object is God's will; its expectation is from Him.

When on my way to the coast, I was detained for a few days in a strange town. One bright autumn morning I sent for a mule-chair, praying the Lord to guide me where I could be used for His glory, or to grant me fellowship with some of his people. As I was quite a stranger in the place, I told the boy who drove to take me into the country, leaving the choice of the road to him.

I strove to watch and not miss any guidance vouchsafed to me. We passed the outskirts of the town, and threaded the long lanes of hazel and beech. I was attracted by an old white-washed cottage, of which we now see so few; its principal features were its high chimneys and its large roomy porch. The myrtles and fuschias blossomed

in profusion around it, and a garden so rich in flowers and fragrant herbs I had seldom seen. I felt inclined to enter, but the mule obstinately pursued its way; so I contentedly dropped a little book upon the cottage pathway.

We proceeded for about half-a-mile, when the mule deliberately turned up to a cottage door and stopped. I had a book in my hand, but before I could speak to the bright-faced woman who came out at the sound of the wheels, she greeted me in the most cordial manner, exclaiming, "How glad we are to have you again."

"I think you mistake me for some one you know; but I am pleased you came out," I said, "as I wanted to leave you a tract if you would like one."

But the woman, without taking it, returned into the house, exclaiming joyfully,

"Master! It is our dear lady come back again!"

A pleasant-looking man followed her, and a few minutes made us acquainted with each other. We were walking the same road—

to our Father's house of many mansions. At last he said,

"My good wife took you for a lady who used to visit us long ago; your voice is so like hers, I do not wonder. It is long since we saw her. Do come in; it will be good for our souls to hear the news of the kingdom; and here are two of our relations come a long way to visit us for the day."

I at once entered the cottage. Neither of the young women seated there knew Him who was the subject of our conversation, the object of our love; but it was most refreshing to mark the interest with which they listened to "the old, old story," and received the books and tracts. I was loth to leave them. As I rose to depart, the kind old man looked at his wife and said,

"The lady ought to see J. E——; how pleased she would be."

"Oh yes!" chimed in the wife; "but it is a long way off."

"Never mind that," I answered. "Is it any one I can help?"

"Why, she has a good deal to bear, ma'am,

but she is such a Christian. And she would like to see you," he added in an inviting tone.

I asked him to describe the house. He replied, "It is a little white-washed cottage in a garden, in the green lane between this and the town. There is a large porch to the cottage."

I felt certain it was the same which had attracted my attention and bidding my new friends an affectionate farewell, we turned the mule's head, and did not stop until we reached the pretty rustic gate to which I had been directed. I waited in vain to see any one; so I left the chair and entered the house.

A middle-aged woman was busily occupied about household work, and I watched her for a few minutes unobserved. The deep peace of her face testified that she was the one I sought. I spoke at once of Him who leadeth the blind by paths they know not. She left her work, and hastened to place a chair for me, and sat beside me. She was not only rejoicing in the forgiveness of

sins; she had learned that salvation from eternal death was not the *end* of Christ's glorious sacrifice, but that He died to bring the sinner into that fellowship with God which Adam had forfeited.

I told her of my prayer, and how richly my Father had answered me. Tears of joy fell fast from her eyes as I detailed to her the source of our unexpected meeting.

"How long have you known what it is to follow Jesus?" I asked.

"It is a fortnight last Friday," she replied. "The Lord had taken me down to the grave's mouth, and when I had learnt the meaning of Luke xiv. 33, He brought me up again. Only that night I had a knowledge of Christ Himself, and of His power, and what He means by leaving 'all' for His sake, or else we cannot be His disciples." (Luke xiv. 33.)

Who teaches like Him? Truly our fellowship was with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ! While I listened to her I felt it would strengthen my hand to sow beside all waters; while for herself it had

taught her that the Lord saw all her needs and could meet them; and she praised Him for sending me there, that out of her heart, surcharged with love and praise, she might tell what great things He had done for her.

She told me that she had known Christ as her salvation for two years previously. A poor Christian pedlar formerly made the circuit of the country in the summer months, carrying cottons, laces, and such light wares as the cottagers could not procure without going to the town. The disciple spoke to her of her heavenly Master, but though her customer kindly received the messenger, she did not heed the message.

A seat in the shady porch was always given her, and refreshment often offered, while the little store of pence, scrupulously set aside for the purpose, was laid out for some of the contents of the basket.

It was in the autumn when the pedlar made her last visit to the cottage, to close her circuit for the year.

The heat of midday was too much for the poor traveller, who, languid and weary,

rested in the welcome porch. The purchases made lightened her load, and she was herself refreshed by speaking of the faithfulness of Him who was her Shepherd in the green pastures, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land; then pointing her listener to Him, she took up her burden to proceed on her way, when her kind host brought forth her store of two shillings, which she had gathered with careful industry to help the lone woman in the winter.

Deeply was the pedlar moved, and she knelt in that porch, so often her sheltering rest, and prayed that when next she entered there she might find that the hand that had been stretched out to bestow the cup of cold water had grasped the Redeemer's robe. Long and fervent was the prayer; then taking up her basket she went on her way, and left the blessing behind. A few weeks afterwards, and she for whom she had prayed believed, and was saved.

Spring came; month after month passed; but the pedlar was seen no more. Vainly the new-born child of faith watched for the

one who had given her spiritual things for temporal ones; but she never came. The bread was cast upon the waters. The work was the Lord's. The means, the time, were His also. It will be found "after many days."

As I took my last look of the cottage porch, I thought how I too was indebted to the child of God, who, sheltered there in the sultry noontide, left a blessing even for me. Jesus had been there. He had said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee;" and now He had called the believer by name, and said unto her, "Follow Me." "Faithful is He that promised."

A friend who was often discouraged in service told me, that in the winter of 1858, which she passed in London, she became interested in a worldly old lady, infirm in body and discontented in mind, who seemed sinking into the grave without any one to warn her, or speak to her of those eternal realities of which she knew little and for which she cared less.

My friend was much occupied in the

week. Sunday was the only day on which she could visit her. This she constantly did, and the exercise of faith and patience was often very severe.

Although the lady did not desire anything better than her worldly friends, and the folly with which they amused her, yet she gladly received her Sunday visitor, as even that was better than being alone.

The zealous servant would not give up her thankless service, so long as the way was open for her to speak for her Master; but now she herself must leave London, and she confessed that it was a relief thus to be delivered from anxious desires of seeing the result of her labours.

The last afternoon when she entered she found a visitor had arrived before her. She proposed in her own mind to bid the old lady farewell, and proceed on another errand; but compassion for the state of the aged sinner overcame her reluctance. Their next meeting would be on that day when the truth she had spoken would be made manifest; and touched with this thought, and

totally regardless of a third person, she spoke long and earnestly.

No sign in the face or voice of her listener gave her reason to hope that her words had made any impression; and they parted to meet no more on this earth.

At the close of the summer of 1860, when the Lord's work was revived, and much blessing was falling on the meetings in the North of England, my friend was at a large open-air meeting, and observed a lady near her whose voice had joined in the last hymn of praise, and she noticed that now the eyes of the stranger were fixed intently on her face. She strove to recall her features,—but in vain; she felt assured that she had never seen her before.

The lady accosted her; my friend suggested that she was mistaken; but the stranger, calling her by name, replied, "I am not likely to be mistaken, or to forget you; through your words I am here to-day rejoicing in God's mercy." It was the visitor of the aged lady, whom she had looked on as an obstacle to her last day's service. The bread was cast

upon the waters, and though it was not seen in the place where the husbandman sought it, yet it was found after many days.

"Thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether both shall be alike good." A testimony of life unto life, and death unto death, may come from the same hand; we can only offer the bread, we cannot give the appetite, neither can we bestow the power of acceptance. But let not "faith stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God."

In one of our large towns in the South of England a lady waited for an evening train. In the course of the day she obtained with some difficulty permission to enter the hospital, which had a reputation for its excellent arrangements. It was not the day on which it was open to casual visitors.

The lady walked slowly down the principal ward, lingering by the beds to speak to the suffering occupants. To each she gave a little book or leaflet, and many a sad face brightened beneath her kindly ministration and cheering words.

In that ward at midnight lay two souls side by side in strange contrast. The tracts given to these two women had found a voice which awoke in one a cry for mercy to the Saviour of sinners, and in the other aroused the bitter sarcasm of despair.

The Christian girl, who gave me the details, occupied the adjoining bed, and the anguish of a soul first beholding itself a sinner on the brink of eternity was terrible to witness.

After a night-long struggle, one of the dying women accepted life from the dead, without money and without price; while her companion, awakened to rage at the necessity of the new birth, and the perfect righteousness of the perfect Sacrifice, died in horror and dismay.

Vainly the doctors sought to quell the madness of despair and the conflict of the spirits of darkness; their healing art could not reach the soul, and the midnight of death had fallen on both soul and body at the eleventh hour.

Orders were issued that if the stranger

returned she should be denied admittance. Many an eye on the visiting day looked for her, and longed for her to return. She came no more. The bread she had cast upon the waters was seen, and *she* will find it after many days. "For God is not a man that He should lie; neither the son of man that He should repent. Hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?"

Say not, "'Twas all in vain,"
The anguish, and the darkness, and the strife;
Love thrown upon the waters comes again
In quenchless yearnings for a holy life.
Think how at midnight, on thy weary sight,
The stars shone forth: beneath their welcome rays
Thy hopes to heaven, like birds, first took their flight,
And thou shalt find them—"after many days."

Say not, "'Twas all in vain,"
The vigil and the sickness and the tears:
For in that land where there is no more pain,
The grain is garnered from these mournful years.
The faded form once sheltered on thy breast,
No more thy gentle ministry repays;
She waits with Jesus in her sinless rest,—
Fear not to find her—"after many days."

Say not, "'Twas all in vain,"
Thy tenderness, thy meekness; oh, not so!
A strength for others' sufferings thou shalt gain,
As healing balms from bruiséd flowerets flow.
Weep not the wealth, in fearless faith cast forth
On the dark billows, shipwrecked to thy gaze:
The bark was frail, the gem has still its worth,
And thou shalt find it—"after many days."

Say not, "'Twas all in vain,"
The watching, and the waiting, and the prayer;
In piercéd hands hath it unanswered lain?
'Twill grow in blessing as it lingers there.
'Tis space where once thy quivering form was cast;
No floating breeze thy heart-wrung cry betrays;
Yet thro' the white-winged choir thy prayer hath past,
And thou shalt find it—"after many days."

Say not, "'Twas all in vain,"
Thy patience, and thy pity, and thy word
In warning breathed 'mid passion's hurricane,
(Unheeded here, thy Lord that whisper heard.)
The tender grief o'er strangers' sorrows shed,
The sacrifice that won no human praise:
In faith upon the waters cast thy bread,
For thou shalt find it—"after many days."

CHAPTER V.

EN-HAKKORE.

(THE WELL OF HIM THAT CRIED.)

"The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."—LUKE xviii. 27.

PRAYER is the confession of need and weakness, and the acknowledgment of Almighty power and readiness to meet them.

The prayer of faith is the simple request of a trustful child to a father who possesses the means as well as the desire to grant it—of an intelligent child, who confides in the wisdom of a parent in the bestowal of the gift—of a loving child, who knows that nothing will be refused him which is really for his good, believing in the

love of Him to whom his wants, and griefs, and joy, are a matter of sympathy and tender consideration.

We have a vivid sense of our need, but if we sought an habitual assurance of the love of God, we should more confidingly spread our daily perplexities before Him, instead of seeking to remedy them for ourselves in the world-wide paths of expediency (Gen. xxvi. 7); as if He who had called us to follow Him was not powerful enough to protect and deliver us without our seeking for help of the princes of this world. (Ezra viii. 22.)

The Lord promises, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Shall we not trust in the word of the living God, and believe that this "grace" includes all possible contingencies? No trouble that hath come upon us seems little to Him. (Neh. ix. 32.) "For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. . . . Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. iv. 15, 16.)

Did we more deeply feel our own insufficiency there would be an increased dependence upon the power of the Holy Spirit; for promise and precept are ever linked for our encouragement. "If ye *abide* in Me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit maketh intercession for us according to the will of God."

We hear repeated murmurs and queries as to unanswered prayer, but seldom if ever coupled with confession of unfaithfulness to the precept enjoined.

Speaking of the efficacy of prayer, one asks,

"Is not submission to God in all the events of life the highest form of prayer?"

It is not prayer in any wise; neither have I yet heard of a soul in perfect submission to God in all the events of life.

"Is it not communion with God, and a state of resignation of our will to His, without *asking* for any definite object, but

leaving it to His love and wisdom to order events for us?"

Why, then, was not our Lord Jesus Christ our perfect pattern in that state, "who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared"? (Heb. v. 7.) And when "He lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me; and I know that Thou hearest me always." And again, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever." And lastly, "Sit ye here while I shall pray. . . . Abba, Father, all things are possible to Thee; take away this cup from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what *Thou* wilt"?

This is the highest form of prayer. The prophets and saints of old had the same plea for the acceptance of their petitions as we have—the faithfulness of God. The new covenant is sealed with the blood of the spotless Son of God. Is He less faithful

now than He was of old? (Heb. viii. 6; vii. 22.) "Pray that ye enter not into temptation."

Abraham *believed* God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness, but he put his own energy to the accomplishment of the promise, and wrought sorrow to himself, the purpose of God still standing sure. *Afterwards* Abraham could say, "The Lord, *before whom I walk*, will send His angel with thee, and prosper thy way;" while Eliezer, comprehending that the path of obedience was the place of blessing, looked for the fulfilment of his commission: "*I being in the way*, the Lord led me."

When we are out of the way, we lose light upon our footsteps, and miss the minute indications of the will of the Lord by which He manifests Himself to His watchful followers (John xiv. 21); and these may be observed, not only in the sunlight of the mountain, but in the path on the dark waters in which He has promised His presence.

The heart, tuned to praise by recognition

of the gracious hand that upholds and directs it, is always prepared for prayer; and declension in the spiritual life will as often arise from disregard of thanksgiving as in negligence of the precept, "Pray without ceasing." Do not, therefore, leave His feet because your heart is cold,—because your thoughts are wandering,—because you are disinclined to speak to Him who loves to hear your voice. The promise is, "They that *wait* upon the Lord shall renew their strength." (Is. xl. 31.) There is no promise for waiting for a more convenient season, for joyous emotions, or for certain devotional sensations. If Satan obstruct your path, fear not! Make mention of the name of that great Conqueror who says for you, "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Do not say, "I am unfit to pray." Your only fitness is your need of Christ's help. Only believe, and thou shalt see the glory of God. Think not, because your cry is not answered in the time and way you have desired, that the Lord has not heard.

Say not, "He answered nothing." Thou didst pray,
"Give me *Thyself!*" and lo! He takes away
Thine idol from thy fond arms' fevered fold;
His garment's hem thy failing fingers hold.
Hush! in that solemn silence He hath heard
Thy sob of anguish and each faltering word;
Go, plead again, and yet again: thy need
Is what thy Saviour meteth; therefore plead.
What! still He answereth nothing! Nay; beneath
That silence rolls, "O woman, great thy faith!"

"Elías was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." (James v. 17, 18.) But when Elias prays, "Take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers," his prayer was unanswered. The set time was not fully come. The work given him to do was not done; his course was not finished. He had yet to anoint Hazael and Jehu kings over Syria and Israel, swords of judgment for the nations. He had to call Elisha from the plough, and anoint him prophet in his room, and pronounce the sentence of the Lord

against the revengeful king, and the woman whose vain threat had driven the true-hearted servant into the wilderness.

The man so ready to resign his life as valueless was still to live, to prove the power committed to him, and to command fire from heaven to consume the hundred soldiers and their captains,—the Lord of heaven and earth thus manifesting to him how easily He could have protected him from the vengeance of an infuriated enemy.

Courage! trembling followers of the Lamb. They that be with us are more than they that be with them. He who delivered us from the bear and the lion, unseen of men, is with us in the single-handed combat with the sling and the stone in the face of the multitude. Forget not His works and His wonders. It is the same God who sustained you in the year of drought, who led you triumphantly through the dangers plotted against you; and though you may fail to apprehend Him in the earthquake, yet in the silence and solitude of the soul that listens for Him the still small voice shall

be heard. The experience of many a wilderness journey is but the preparation for the chariot of fire.

The mystical union of Christ and the believer has heights and depths that pass man's understanding; and those to whom the secret of the Lord is known have learned deep lessons of His power, and their own insufficiency, beneath the shadow of the juniper.

The Master whom Elias served had better things in store for him. Was it in that desert solitude, with no eye to behold His wondrous translation, that the Lord had appointed to call away His faithful and hitherto unflinching witness? Thus the cry of nature is refused or delayed for better things.

Jesus said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." The Father would not be glorified by the acceptance of many of the natural heart's desires. His chosen people desired quails, and quails were given them: the answer resulted in judgment. The persistent prayer from an unsanctified will brings its certain chastening.

I knew a lady who had an only son—a lovely and intelligent boy. He was the idol of her life. Sickness seized him; and one evening the physicians broke to the agonized mother,—that in the night the child must die!

In the bitterness of her grief she persisted that he should not die, and throwing herself on her face declared before God that she would never rise until his life should be granted to her.

The hours of night passed heavily on. In the morning the child still lived, and the crisis was declared to have passed. He recovered. His brilliant abilities won for him earthly honours at school and college. He was the pride of his mother's heart. Then without any apparent cause the powers of his mind utterly failed; nor did it end there. When I knew her his abode was in one of those mournful habitations of restraint that preach so loudly to the proud of heart and those of boasted intellect. His mother, then an aged woman, had never received from him one expression of recognition,

when allowed at certain seasons to visit him, and she herself was slow to acknowledge the answer to her unsanctified prayer.

"The prayer of faith shall save the sick."

Nay, this was not the prayer of faith, but of the natural heart's rebellion.

Who is there, knowing the power of the Lord to forgive sins, and who is rejoicing in sins forgiven, that has not longed for His visible presence by the bed of suffering, where some cherished one lies at the point of death? Such will have followed in tenderest sympathy the steps of Jesus when the ruler fell at His feet, "and besought Him that He would come into his house; for he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying."

Watch for Him still. It is the same Jesus, whose tender heart is not less tender since He laid down His life for you. In Him is wisdom for your way, and solace for your sorrow.

The heart oppressed by its burden of woe cannot realize that it prays at all.

"Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick," *was*

the prayer of faith, and expressed the great need of the presence of Him whose power and love were acknowledged in it. Jesus knew that Lazarus was sick, and yet He tarried.

We are too eager to escape the cloud in which we afterwards find the glory of the Lord is enshrouded. Martha and Mary would fain have saved Lazarus from death. "Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died," sounds upbraidingly to that BLESSED ONE who came to do more than they could ask or think. They thought the personal presence of the Lord would have saved them from this trial. He came to open to them deeper truths, and the power of the Lord of life was thus discovered in the triumph of resurrection.

Had the sisters' first anxious cry been answered, and the sick one whom Jesus loved been healed at once, what a glorious manifestation of the divine purpose would have been withheld! Nor were the precious revelations confined to the family of Bethany, for with the trial of their faith

room must be made for the display of the glory of God.

When the Jews followed Mary, they thought that she was going to the grave to weep,—and they found themselves at the feet of Jesus.

Who, that has received a beloved one again from the borders of the unseen world, knows not the hallowing influence of such a restoration? In answer to the prayer, that seemed no prayer to the sinking heart that breathed it, the Good Physician has been in the house when we thought Him unmindful of our affliction. He has whispered, "This sickness is not unto death," and we scarce believed Him; yet He has stood by and rebuked the fever, and He has restored our fading treasure to the arms of our "little-faith." His hand, His pierced hand, has been upon what we best loved; and *that* must render it twice the gift of God. Never more can we regard it as our own, as once we did; it lives before us a witness of Eternal Truth, sealed with the faithfulness of God.

And you who watch and weep to-day, tempted to think that had the Lord been here your loved one had not died,—"only believe." He knows your sorrows, and in Him who wept at Bethany behold the living God! Jesus never comes too late.

Some who know Him not will gather round you in tender sympathy; they cannot reach beyond the freshly-closed grave: but there may follow one who can, and find Him who is the Resurrection and the Life.

The long and weary sickness that baffles all human skill and care is often the perfecting of faith, and hope, and patience. Fruit is fairer in the valley-land than on the hill-top. The constant prayer for His presence who can alone sustain leaves a track on the dark waters,—unseen by others, but declaring to us the glory of God.

"Be still, and know that I am God."

Lord! look upon my loved one and on Thine,
For Thou art full of mercy. On a way
Begirt with deepening shadows, let there shine
The light of Thy dear smile. Lo! day by day,
With sinking heart and eager gaze, I seek
Some fuller accent, or some answering smile,

Some beam of health on lip, or brow, or cheek,
My anxious, weary watching to beguile.
Not thus, O Lord, canst Thou the blessing shed:
Give me submission to Thy sovereign will;
Behold my empty hands to Thee outspread,
I know that Thou art God: I will be still.

Sad hearts! Trust your treasures to your Omnipotent Friend. A little while, only a little while, and they that sleep in Jesus shall come with Him to die no more; death shall have no more dominion over them. And some in yon bright cloud of glory may point to where you prayed, ere your sick one was raised again,—where Jesus stood unseen,—as the spot where they looked for the first time from earth to heaven, and heard the voice of the living God.

We pray. We say that God is the Hearer and Answerer of prayer; but if the answer does not immediately return in the way our short-sighted wisdom has pre-determined, we faint, and either listen to the suggestion of the Evil One, that the Lord does not hear such prayers, or to our own heart's deceitful surmises, that He will not heed *this* mat-

ter. He says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts." (Isaiah lv. 8.)

Many events have often to transpire before prayer can be granted; many hopes must die away, the energy of the flesh wither. Circumstances are weaving a chain out of what seems to us a ravelled yarn; yet gradually and in perfect order shall be developed the gracious design of the Most High to His waiting servant; for none ever sought Him in vain.

In some cases the time is nearly fulfilled for the purpose, before the Holy Spirit indites the prayer. Thus hope in God is encouraged, and the breath of earnest supplication wafts the longed-for vessel swiftly into the desired haven.

In some soul for whom we seem to be interceding in vain the seed has only germinated, and we expect to behold ripened grain. "Blessed are ye who have not seen, and yet have believed." A Father's eye of love is on His petitioner; He is cultivating faith and patience in the restless heart while granting its request.

We pray for a child, that he may live to the glory of the Lord we love. The Lord gathers it, and we say "He did not hear." Nay, He has heard and answered. The little one has outstripped us in the race, and has left behind a hallowed record. The lisping words of truth the Holy Comforter taught him are fondly treasured, and the child of many prayers has brought forth fruit to everlasting life.

Thus weeping eyes look upward, and see Jesus; and girding up their garments anew toil after the little messenger of love, whom the Good Shepherd allowed to sojourn in their midst. The prayer *is* answered; the child has lived to the glory of God!

You pray for some grace; you are answered by a temptation for which this grace is peculiarly needed. Is not *this* a swift answer to prayer?—that you may learn at once the hopelessness of self-effort, and cast yourself on Him who says, "Call upon Me and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things that thou knowest not."

You desire some gift. Are you fitted for

it? Were the Israelites prepared to enter the promised land as soon as they had passed the Red Sea? The spiritual blessing may seem near, almost realized, and then by some strange winding of our course be farther off than ever. Discouraged, we cry, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" Nay, "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." (Prov. ii. 3–5.) Such gifts are not received in some sudden effusion of the Spirit, but by means which often make us think our failures are greater, as morning light will disclose much that twilight conceals.

Be of good courage! God will have regard to the work of His own hands. With joy He hears you plead. If the natural prayer is often denied for blessing, the prayer for grace is for God's glory; it is indited by the Holy Spirit; it must be answered; it is

the will of God. Though it tarry wait for it! (1 John v. 14.)

In my early spiritual life I had a deep sense of the essential requisite of assurance of salvation. In vain I pondered on the Scriptures, "He that believeth on Me *hath* everlasting life." "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that *believe* on the name of the Son of God; that ye may *know* that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." (1 John v. 12, 13.)

These words might bring conviction to other hearts; they brought none to mine, because I had not realized that this gift came by grace from the Holy Spirit, and not from any intellectual assent of the human understanding to a truth of God.

The absolute necessity of knowing my position as a child of God (if I were one); of laying claim to all the promises laid up for me; and of taking advantage of the unsearchable riches, which I *sometimes* thought

might be mine; this seemed beyond all idea of service,—and as for testimony, there could be none without it.

It may be asked, Did I disbelieve Scripture? I thought I did not, but it was a virtual denial; for "he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And *this is the record*, that God *hath* given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." (1 John v. 10, 11.)

I was waiting at a dentist's in great pain and apprehension before the extraction of a tooth. I did not pray for any mitigation of the suffering; it seemed as though the pain would be nothing if I only possessed an abiding assurance of salvation. If peace and joy filled my heart in contemplating the covenant of grace, I wondered if I had a right to be joyful; and if depressed, and unable to enter into the joy of the Lord, Satan set it forth as a convincing fact that I had no portion in my Father's house.

I prayed for other things. I obtained answers, but never until this day had I seen

that this gift which was lacking in me, and the most essential testimony to the love of God towards me, could not be obtained by any self-effort; yet it *was* for me. The Holy Ghost was promised in these "good gifts" to them that ask for them.

I felt that the Lord, and the Lord only, could end the strife, and why I had never seen this until then I knew not.

The room was crowded with people; it hindered me not, I was as much alone as if in my closet. All my thoughts were centred on the desire to have this momentous question decided once and for ever.

I sought for a Bible among the books around, but no Bible was there. The first moment my disappointment was great, believing that God's own Word, received in faith by the power of the Holy Ghost, would resolve all my doubts.

My cry had ascended into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and I felt obstacles to me were no hindrance to Him; and my prayer was "Speak, *Lord!* It matters not to Thee, Thou canst speak through any book, or

without a book; only tell me that *I* am Thine."

I laid my hand upon a volume near me. I remember it was "Travels in the East." I opened it, and in italics I read, "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." (Isaiah xliii. 1–3.)

That moment the witness of the Spirit was sealed on my soul. I only paused in my praise to pray that it might never be withdrawn. By grace we are saved; by grace also are we upheld. God is faithful, though I am unfaithful. In spite of the attacks of Satan, in spite of my own waywardness and disobedience, this gracious token of prayer heard and answered has never been taken from me; and the remembrance of that hour remains with me a fruit-

ful source of praise. I gladly received Him, for I was waiting for Him. (Luke viii. 40.)

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above," therefore given and received by the Holy Spirit's power.

Our lack of faith in not believing that our prayer has availed, or can avail, to bring the blessing we need, is often the obstacle to our thanksgiving. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (Heb. xi. 6.)

We act as if our prayer for grace would be granted by some pleasurable and joyous emotions; instead of which it is not unfrequently answered by some new view of our corruption, or some circumstance calling more loudly for our need of this grace. Though it come not in the form you expect, yet it *will* come.

The prayer for unconverted relatives is perhaps the one nearest to this in the heart of the believer. And the little subjection of the natural will often renders this service one of peculiar trial and temptation. We

decide on some means which we pre suppose shall be effectual to bring before the sinner his true state:—the sermon of some eloquent preacher; the convincing arguments in a tract or book; the visit of some successful missionary; our own unpalatable counsel and disregarded warnings. All fail.

Are you seeking for souls among your own kinsfolk and acquaintance? Remember you tread in the path of the Master. But unlike Him you have to recall the days when your own pride might have revolted against the exhortations of those who longed and prayed to see you partaker of their blessed portion. No missionary on the wide field of the heathen hath greater need of the abiding power of the Holy Spirit. But there is One who will not be forgetful of your labour of love.

Be patient, but not supine. You are living together, the saved with the unsaved. There may not be any very material difference visible to the natural eyes; for nature has many pleasant fruits, though they will be burnt up. You share in common the

sunshine and the rain, for He sendeth these blessings upon the just and the unjust;" but you are separated, as light from darkness. The blood is upon one. The angel of destruction can touch him not. He is "shut in."

He who is in darkness without cannot judge of the light within: therefore you will be uncomprehended and misjudged,—for a blind man cannot tell the value of a precious stone; it needs a lapidary to pronounce upon its worth and weight.

"Be strong and very courageous;" and this can only be as you live in the Spirit. Watch unto prayer. Speak little to unconverted friends without earnest supplication for yourself. But speak much for them to Him who is able to save to the uttermost; for "it is not the will of your Father that one of these little ones should perish."

I knew a widower who had an only child. From her early childhood she was an anxious care to her godly father. For seventeen years this parent prayed without any evidence that his prayer was heard,

save the abiding promise that cannot lie: "If ye abide in Me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (John xv. 7.)

A preacher of the gospel, and a truly converted man, became interested in this daughter; whether she gave some appearance of being touched by his solicitude for her, which he mistook for an evidence of change of heart, I know not, but he married her. And thus, neglecting the injunction not to be unequally yoked, he wrought for himself much bitterness and sorrow.

The young wife ridiculed her husband; she attended the services in which he was engaged, and with a foolish companion delighted in mocking him on their return. Heart-sick her poor father looked back on nineteen years of unanswered prayer, and in desolation of heart he said,

"I will go and see her once again, and I will then pray for her no more." So he set off to visit her.

He reached his son-in-law's house; the cloth was spread for supper. No one was

there; a neighbour told him every one was gone to the meeting.

The sad-hearted man sat himself down and reviewed the past, and groaned in anguish of spirit; and he said, "I will wait here and warn her again, and then I will pray for her no more."

But now were heard the steps of the people returning from the meeting, and his son-in-law entered, followed by ——, this child of many prayers. The father shrank back, expecting to hear some words of cruel mockery. What was his amazement when, after a most tender greeting, he beheld husband and wife kneel side by side, and one after the other pour forth glad thanksgivings for salvation that had visited their dwelling. Happy, happy day!

Take courage, ye who carry your rebellious children and unbelieving relatives to the Lord Jehovah! Be it nineteen years, or twice told nineteen years, fear not; only abide in Him! Ye know not when, nor where, nor through what channel, will flow the grace of God; enough when you hear,

"Go thy way; thy son liveth." Only abide in Him.

A Christian lady had an only brother, her last near relative. While she rejoiced in the way of life, he walked the paths of death. He was a confirmed drunkard. She, with friends and a position of affluence in this world, had her heart set on the world beyond.

This affectionate and intelligent woman, strong in Him who is able to subdue all things unto Himself, left her own pleasant home, and took up her abode in the poor drunkard's dwelling.

Years passed by. There may have been hours of sorrow and regret in the days of the unhappy man, but he had never sorrowed after a godly sort, and they wrought no change in him.

Day after day on the borders of the lake where they dwelt, she might be seen in the summer twilight following at a distance the unsteady steps of the wanderer, as a mother would watch her child.

The position which she voluntarily ac-

cepted sundered her even from Christian relationship. It may be that thus she found the strength to walk therein to the glory of the Lord. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." (Jer. xvii. 7.)

In the minds of others all expectation of any favourable result from her self-denying service had failed long since. Not so in the mind of a faithful disciple of Him who came to seek and to save. When urged to leave the wretched man to his fate, and to bestow her time and abilities on more fruitful sources of service, her reply was always the same, "The Lord has called me to *this* work; there is no one else to do it. God will give me my brother's soul!"

After a few days' sudden illness, the Lord of seed-time and harvest called home His faithful labourer. And some who had known her faith, and the patient, watchful care bestowed on one who disregarded it, said, "It has been all in vain! Who will watch him now? who will care for him now?"

Oh, dear friends, God is faithful; judge

nothing before the time. Was there no evidence during this seed-time? was the path all barren? Nay; long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, everlasting fruit *laid up* for the beloved, *was* seen.

That pale coffined form follows the wanderer no more; but the silence of death seals with a mighty force the service done. Where are the thousand, thousand prayers? Where is the evidence which her dying breath repeated, abiding in the Beloved,—"God will give me my brother's soul"?

The grass was not green upon her grave, not far from the shore of the lake where the faithful woman trod so often in faith, when —behold the harvest! The brother so long sought is found! Behold him clothed and in his right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus, a living testimony to the power of believing prayer according to the new covenant of promise. (John xv. 5, 7.)

The Bible is full of prayers and answers to prayers, evidences of man's helplessness and of God's almighty power. The lives of those who watch for Him are full of tokens

of His faithfulness and care (Luke xii. 7) and in the lives of those who do *not* watch for Him may be traced the effect of the prayers of those who do. Chapters would not suffice to record the answers to my own feeble cry. With shame I confess how often I listen to the whisper of my unbelieving heart, "Trouble not the Master." "Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to usward; they cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." (Ps. xl. 15.)

The simplicity of prayer, and the simplicity of the means by which it is answered, are often used to the pulling down strongholds, and confounding the things that are mighty. Our very infirmities and necessities thus become sources of everlasting blessing; and some mean and otherwise useless instrument may slay a host of our enemies, and prove the medium of a living fountain to a thirsty soul.

One morning I was preparing my packets

of tracts and *Revivals*, &c., to send to some distant friends: several had to be posted in time for the foreign mail. All looked for them by a certain day. Only a short time remained for me to send them to the neighbouring town, when, to my dismay, I had no string. Devising several expedients, and failing in all, I did at last what I should have done at first—told Jesus. I sat quietly waiting, when it struck me that I would again examine the bag in which previously I had made a fruitless search. I found a tiny roll of twine, enough for one parcel, but very precious to me as a sign of my Father's answering. I had already vainly applied to my landlady. But I rang the bell. It was answered by a little girl who came to assist her, and who occasionally waited on me.

I had before me many an evidence that my Redeemer liveth. I had told Him my desire that the dear friends who looked for their monthly remembrance should not be disappointed. I was importunate, for the hour was waning fast.

I asked the child if she could go to

town, thinking I might yet be able to send her to buy some new string. She smiled and listened, but made no answer: she then left the room, returning with a large ball of pink twine, which she placed exultingly before me, saying, "Father made it on purpose for you, ma'am. He wanted to do something for you, you were so kind to me; he is a rope-maker, and he said that this twine was the best thing he could think of; it was only finished last night."

Never, surely, did a ball of pink twine awake a more grateful song of praise. The parcels were completed, and my happy little helper carried them off to the post.

In the evening my landlady told me that she had a relation coming to visit her, adding, "I think she is a Christian; but she is always fretting, and never knows whether she is right or wrong. I wish you could speak to her. I fear she won't be persuaded to see you."

From the window the following day I remarked a stranger; her countenance betokened a heart ill at ease. I pondered on

inviting her in, when my landlady ushered her into my room at her own request. She was a Christian, so far as believing that the punishment due to her sins had been laid upon the spotless Son of God. But, while she confessed that she knew that He had died for her, she had never realized that "He liveth."

She was full of "responsibility," of working and doing, without having believed that "Without Me ye can do nothing," and that the Holy Spirit must work in us, to *will* and to do of His good pleasure.

The Lord led her to open her heart to me, and I saw from whence her trouble arose. When she paused I said, "Have you ever told Jesus all you have told me?"

"No," she answered in surprise, "I should not think He would listen to me about such a thing; it would be but a little matter to Him."

"Your poor delicate baby is a very little thing, but you love it."

"Yes, indeed."

"It is a very little thing to others if the unclosed shutter lets in the dancing sun-

beam upon its face, and keeps it from its midday sleep; but you make it a great matter, because you love to know that your child is not suffering sleeplessness from it."

I then pointed to the ball of twine that, though decreased in size, was still a goodly testimony to the faithfulness of the living God. I told her its history. She listened with an interest deeper than curiosity, as I assured her from experience that there was nothing small or great to the eternal Father. Scarcely had I paused ere she was summoned to her supper.

When she came to take leave of me, her "countenance was no more sad." She thanked me warmly for the words I had been led to speak to her, and pointing to the ball of string she smiled and said,

"To think it was that little ball of twine did it all!"

Thus the mean weapon with which Giant Doubt was slain became a well of water to one who cried.

My window overlooked a small homestead and fields, on which the tenant himself

laboured. From the pillow of my sofa I had watched the grain ripen for the sickle, and later the group of men and women reaping, gathering, and gleaning.

The harvest was over. It was a warm, moist day, with occasional heavy mist and rain. I had ceased to enjoy the close of the harvest: the one poor horse had toiled with scarcely any intermission from early morn till eve, and I was thankful when I saw the poor jaded creature led off to his stable, instead of dying on the field.

Scarcely half an hour had passed when the master returned, very smartly attired in his Sunday suit, dragging the poor reluctant animal by the bridle. He fastened it to a sledge, which he loaded heavily with wood. The weary creature could not draw the load; its drooping head told its inability. The farmer seized a yoke that lay by it, and beneath the fierce blow he dealt it it nearly sank, but did not move forward. Could my voice have reached him in a petition to spare the sinking beast, it would have availed little against the wrath of man; but

in less time than I can write it I cried to the Lord God for deliverance for the horse. Swift as my cry came the answer. As the man raised the yoke again to smite, his foot slipped and he fell, and failing to gain his footing he rolled in the black mud. When he arose he presented a melancholy spectacle. After a few minutes to recover himself he unfastened the horse, who moved off to his stable. The sledge I saw still laden with wood in the morning.

Doth God take care for oxen, and will He not for horses? Will He remember the sparrow, and give no heed to the cry of His children?

In a lodging I had taken elsewhere in the summer I was disturbed by mice. I complained to my landlady, who was firmly persuaded that no mice had ever been heard in my apartments. She evidently thought that it was some imaginary mouse. I was suffering seriously from want of sleep. I had complained to my landlady twice, and not once had I told Him, to whom my sufferings were of far greater interest.

Worn out by repeated nights of watching I at last told Jesus, and that night I slept soundly; the next night the same. I heard no more of the mice; my landlady thus triumphantly proving to her own satisfaction that the supposed mouse was not a mouse.

I write it with shame. I confess that I accepted this great mercy as a matter of course, without thanksgiving, though conscious that the Lord had done it all. When one sultry evening I entered my bedroom the windows were closed; an odour so offensive met me, that I hastily opened the windows and left the room. When I returned to bed the room was still insupportable. And now I felt ashamed to complain again to my landlady, lest I should weary her.

Then, and not till then, did I remember One who fainteth not, neither is weary; whose ear is open to our cry; and whose hand is powerful to help. To sleep in the room as it was, was out of the question, and it was now late in the night. I began to carefully search the chamber. One of the

old-fashioned fire-irons had fallen from its upright position; I raised it, and underneath, crushed by its weight, lay a large dead mouse in a state of decomposition. Ah! then my thankless heart remembered my Father's care, and I praised. O blessed day of small things, which the God who clothes the grass, and gives food to the ravens who cry, does not despise!

When I showed my landlady this evidence of blessing and reproof from the hand of my heavenly Master, she began to consider if such things *could* be,—that the Lord of the whole earth would have regard to the sleepless nights and aching head of His sick child; and often I was allowed to point her anxious mind to my own Staff, too frequently mislaid or forgotten. "Be careful for *nothing;* but in EVERYTHING by prayer and supplication, *with* thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God: and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Phil. iv. 6.)

THE LOOK.

"And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might."
JUDGES vi. 14.

I LOOKED upon the olive-grove,
What comfort could it bring?
The fruitful vine, once full of speech,
Was but a common thing.
Up to the gorgeous skies I gazed,
Down to the silvery sea,
On to the purple sunset heights;
But all were dumb to me.

Then back I turned to vanished days,
When Christ His love revealed—
To messages of hope and peace,
His faithful hand had sealed.
And well I knew, "for *me* He *died*,"
But yet no rest could be,
Until my drooping heart could sing,
"My Saviour *lives* for me!"

I looked upon my wounded feet,
So often led astray;
I strove to count my countless sins,
For ever put away;
I looked on everything but Him,
In desolating grief,
And found!—O heart, what couldst thou find
Of solace and relief?

Then sat I down before the Lord,
That *He* my need might see;
And helpless, hopeless, speechless, then
My Saviour looked on me.
Oh, look of life! oh, might of love!
My heart that glance returned,
And melting 'neath His heavenly smile,
With joy and ardour burned.

Just so my sweet and sovereign Lord
On Peter looked before:
He, in the strength of that one look,
Denied his Lord no more;
But followed Him in life to death:
Lord, let *me* do the same;
Yea, let *me* go in this thy might—
Strong in Thy Holy Name.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PLEASANT PLANT.

"If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?"—JUDGES vi. 13.

AS I sat on the terrace of my foreign dwelling, and looked from the blue waters of the vine-clad shores of Lake Leman in its sunny loveliness, to Mont Blanc crowned with snow towering above it, I felt how perfectly the contrasts of Nature harmonized beneath the hand of the great Creator.

Sheltered beneath the terrace of the chateau were the earliest and choicest vines: their fruit had long been formed, and in some places it was even ripening, so that I was surprised to see a man pruning among them. It seemed almost cruel to denude

them of so much of their lovely foliage when they needed protection from the heat of the sun. I descended the slope, and found the path bestrewed with the branches and their graceful tendrils, already burnt up in the glowing noon.

With deep interest I watched the vine-dresser as he intelligently examined every branch before pruning it, so skilfully did he use the sharp knife, and so carefully did he handle the branches. I inquired,

"Monsieur, will you tell me why you are pruning your vines so late? I thought all such work had been completed long since. Surely some of these branches might be left; it appears a pity to cut them so closely."

He smiled at my ignorance, and replied,

"Nay, madame; the value of the vine is in the fruit, not in the leaves. If these branches remain, they may make wood; but it is my fruit *here* that I have my eye upon."

On this the knife pruned expertly close to the leading stem, and as the branch fell, it disclosed three or four rich clusters of

grapes near to the root. A few strong, healthy leaves were left to protect them from being dried up by the ardent rays of the sun, and to prevent the too rapid exhalation of the dew, while the fair clustering fruit was nourished into full strength and beauty by the sap from which it drew its life.

"I am the proprietor," said the stranger pausing, and glancing with evident satisfaction along the vine-clad slope. "I love to work among my vines myself. I watch them in their growth; I think about them, and prune them with care; but if you saw the men employed down there," said he in a tone of commiseration, pointing compassionately to another vineyard, "you would see that they cut here, and slash there, and bruise, and break, and trample among them, without understanding."

As he continued his work I spoke to him of the heavenly Husbandman, and the great Vintage. He confessed it would be well if such thought would come with the labour, and there our conversation ended. Retracing

my steps to my seat beneath the lofty maples, the words that Jesus spoke came fresh to my heart, "I am the True Vine, and my Father is the Husbandman. . . . . Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear *much* fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." (John xv. 1, 8.)

This man did not look for a few scattered berries, or untimely fruit; he was anticipating an abundant vintage, which should hereafter produce wine to "make glad the heart of man." And the leaves which he was removing, if they fell not beneath the pruning-knife of the husbandman, would perish in the winter's cold.

Many weeks had gone by since I had first looked on this vineyard. What cloudy days we had seen! What storms had beaten the young plants low!—and yet they lived and bore fruit; and some bore "*much* fruit." The sun had sent its searching beams among them, and wild winds from the mountains had threatened to uproot them. They had been early pruned, and now they were pruned again, and beneath it all they became more fruitful and beautiful! And there is yet

another process for which we wait. The bruising and crushing of the grape is to come, ere the juice shall produce the wine for which it was cultivated. By many such means is the Great Husbandman preparing the branches of His choice Vine, and maturing heavenly fruit for His eternal joy!

When the young branches are first pruned they "weep"* or bleed, and then the buds of promise burst forth; but when they are last pruned fruit is there, and it responds to the pruning by increased richness and beauty.

I praised my God and Father that He had given me to read and rejoice in this fair page of Nature opened before me, on which His own hand had inscribed, "God is love."

* The "weeping" of the vine, which continues for two or three days, has been used for one of the false miracles of the Romish church, the vine-branches being placed in the figure of the Virgin in such a way that the tears of the vine fell at intervals from her eyes. This was pointed out by the priests as a mark of the loving pity of the Virgin mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, and a reason why her intercession must be beneficial and necessary to the acceptance of the prayers of the worshippers.

The Lord delighteth in the prosperity of His choice Vine-branches. Ah, my friend! it is not the prosperity that Asaph envied. He has better things for His beloved. The scorching fires of temptation, and the rough blasts of malignity and oppression, and cloudy days of sickness, and sadness, and desolation, will in the end show the love and wisdom of the Great Husbandman.

Tribulation in various forms is the special sign of the Church militant. There is a certain amount of the sufferings of Christ for His body's sake, the Church, which must be filled up; but the sighs are all counted, the tears are all numbered, not one stifled sob is omitted; they have each a purpose to fulfil; but "as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." (2 Cor. i. 5.) We fear affliction, yet it is the Sheckinah in which it oftentimes pleases the Lord to reveal Himself more immediately to His beloved people. Many a one, in looking back upon those pruning times, bears witness to the glory seen in the darkest day. Nor are we

to suppose that, when God changes the nature of the trial, it is an expression of His displeasure, but rather to call into action some undeveloped grace of the Holy Spirit, and increase the fruitfulness of the believer. Christ appeared in "another form" to certain of His disciples; but it was the same heavenly Master, bent on the same gracious purpose, to teach them to wait for Him, watch for Him, and trust in Him; therefore, "no man should be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto." (1 Thess. iii. 3.)

Perhaps the early pruning of a converted soul consists in the first necessity that occurs of believing in opposition to sense; to know that Christ is the same (Heb. xiii. 8), when the palsied hand of faith can no more joyously handle Him. Unconsciously to ourselves we rely upon our emotions, rather than upon the object of faith. The sure Rock that trembles not is the Christ of the Word—God revealed in Jesus.

The infallible testimony is, that Christ is God (1 John i. 1), and that His covenant

standeth sure. And when shadows lengthen and deepen and fall on one pleasant hope after another,—when every nerve vibrates, and your heart sinks, so that you can no longer feel that you cling to Him with your trembling grasp,—oh then, how precious the assurance that in Him is no shadow of turning, in Him is no darkness at all; and though you cannot hold Him (as you think), yet He holds you, and nothing can pluck you out of your Father's hand.

We are prone to think we are only safe when faith is in full vigour; but we have no more cause to fear when it can only touch the hem of the Saviour's robe. "I am the Lord, I change not." "God is not a man that He should lie."

Infirmities are not sins; and yet they are often regarded as such. The clouded intellect, the shattered nerves, the lost faculty of setting before another the ground of your hope, dismay the soul; but on that sad heart the compassionate eye of the blessed One is resting in full comprehension, and tender sympathy. "The Lord looketh on

the heart." Its depths reflect the Rock, though no dancing sunbeams light its surface to attract or rejoice other eyes. He beholds the desire after Himself, though for His own wise purpose He permits you to feel your own impotence to recognize Him until He reveal Himself. But the message of love is still for you, "Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified." "Be of good comfort." "It is I, be not afraid."

It is written, "I will remember my covenant with thee;" but oh, how often do we forget it, and so lose sight of Jesus and of a Father's love. It is the omission of frequent confession of sin, and the neglect of application to the High Priest of the sanctuary that we may realize the blood that cleanseth, which make many a dear child of God sorrowful and afraid. One believing glance at Jesus, and self-love and unbelief fall before us. God Himself is glorified by our reliance on His word spoken, and sealed with the blood of the Lamb slain. (Rom. iii. 24.)

"I have none of the joys of communion

with the Lord," said a sorely-tried Christian to me; "but I believe in Him, and love Him. The best that I can do in these dark days is to read His covenant of mercy by which I was called, and in which I am sustained, and cry, 'Forget not thy covenant.' Often I can do no more than place my finger on the word, which now seems my stronghold, 'MY covenant,' and plead it with Him to keep me from sinking."

The Lord, tender and gracious, does not withhold "more grace" from those who stay themselves on the first round of the ladder; but He would have them believingly ascend and behold the glory which shall follow. Fear not, "He will ever be mindful of His covenant."

We may be conscious of the snare from which an affliction has delivered us, or the evil it was intended to reveal or purge, or we may not; therefore often is the child of God in much amazement in his early trials. Others may rashly judge him, and write bitter things against the righteous—nay, the righteous will be ready enough to write

bitter things against himself. God alone knoweth the heart. One thing only it is declared to know—"its own bitterness."

O blessed thought! He who alone knoweth it has love and sympathy to meet its every need. *He* knoweth all its aggravations, its secret spring of pain, its hours of hopelessness, its dire temptations, its low condition, its rebellion, hardness, and deceit. All this the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ knew before He gave His Son to die for you. All this the Beloved Son in the Father's bosom knew before He took on Himself your nature, and laid down His sinless life for your sins. All this the Holy Ghost knew before He began to manifest the work of sanctification in your soul. The promise is sure. "Sin shall not have dominion over you." There is a wide distinction between temptation and sin. The sin consented unto is the cause of our humiliation; the temptation resisted we are commanded to count "all joy." The heart sighing after fuller communion with the Beloved may be more harassed with corruption for a time than in a lower sphere of

spiritual life. The great Adversary can judge of the soul's progress; he sees the believer approaching a point where henceforth his malice will be unavailing,—therefore he puts forth his stratagems to retard such an one: that hour brings with it another blow to his kingdom, by the child of faith entering into closer fellowship with the Power and Wisdom of God. "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." (Rom. viii. 37.)

If we have to conquer—then there is an enemy; and as there is armour provided, there is certainly conflict. If there were no "fiery darts," what need of the shield of faith? Christianity is not only defensive, it is aggressive. There are wicked spirits in heavenly places as well as the visible wolves which walk in sheep's clothing, ready to wound or destroy. There are the hosts of evil imaginations, and cruel desires; and these leave a wide field for conflict, and conquest through faith in the blood of the Lamb slain. "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

(Psalm cxxiv. 8.) If the Thessalonians had not endured persecution and tribulation, Paul could not have rejoiced in their patience and faith, which were the fruits thereof. (2 Thess. i. 4.) If he himself had not been brought before Cæsar, we should have lost his thrilling discourse, and he would have missed the occasion of testimony for the Lord, and of reasoning with Felix on righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.

There is a "needs be" for the stormy blasts, and the burning sun, and the sharp knife, if the life and prosperity of the Lord's choice vine is to be proved.

The Lord has pronounced a blessing on the meek (Matt. v. 5); but unless the soul be placed in a position of temptation, how shall the grace of God in the power of the Holy Ghost be manifested? "I will beautify the meek with salvation." How? Circumstances must prove that grace strengthens the soul for deeper trials.

One of the largest Hospitals in a city in the South of France was blessed with a

directress or matron who was a faithful follower of the Lord. Her service was not a thing apart from her spiritual life, but a field on which she sought to glorify Him whose disciple she was.

She was often subjected to misapprehension by, and even insult from, the patients; but she had learnt by grace, that a meek and quiet spirit was of great price in the sight of Him who was meek and lowly of heart.

On one occasion a patient, angry at a rule of the Hospital being enforced, spat in the matron's face in the presence of the assembled ward; she quietly wiped her face, saying, "I have been greatly honoured to share the indignity offered to my blessed Saviour." The outrage was never repeated. But afterwards a new patient was admitted, and when placed in bed, the matron sent her daughter to remove the apparel from the ward to another apartment, as no clothing was allowed to be retained in the sleeping-room. As the young girl stooped to gather the clothing together, the woman, enraged that it should be removed, bent over her, and raising one of

her heavy sabôts (clogs) struck her violently and repeatedly on the back.

All looked on in wonder and dismay at this undeserved cruelty to one who had never offended, feeling that *this* must touch the mother's heart far more severely than any indignity offered to herself.

The matron calmly continued her duties. In the evening the culprit beheld her approach her bed. She waited for some word of reproach,—none came; for some expression of displeasure in her face,—none was seen. Christ was in His Holy Temple, and all the earth kept silence before Him!

Carefully she arranged the pillows, tenderly she spoke to the woman while performing the offices of kindness which she might well have deputed to another. The culprit shrank before her; there was no sign of the remembrance of this most unlovely deed. The heart of the harsh and violent woman melted beneath the power of the Holy Spirit. She watched and listened to the directress, as from day to day she ministered of the "good things" promised by her Heavenly

Father; and in a little time the truly new-born child of God confessed Christ. Before leaving the Hospital she declared that the meek forgiveness of injury thus manifested, by one who walked with God, had broken her heart and prepared it for the blessings awaiting her.

Ye who pine to serve and can find no place, "Go and do thou likewise."

There are cloudy days for the pleasant plant, for fruit is forming; and if the sunshine falls on the bud of promise, then the goodly branch will droop. So we miss some from their place, when all seemed to give hope of much fruit; and the labourer, bewildered at the sudden transition from what *seemed* prosperity to utter desolation, cries, "Why is it thus with me?"

Ah! the Great Husbandman knows why; and what "*thou* knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter." The zeal with which you seemed to serve God may have appeared to you an acceptable service, calling for something better than this abrupt termination. "God seeth not as man seeth." The very

success and enjoyment in the work so dear to you may have covered a snare from which He in His wisdom has seen fit to shelter His blind but beloved child. His eye detects the leaves that must fall; and though the knife be sharp, it is Love that holds it. Better that the right hand be cut off, than that the soul He loves should suffer loss. Your comeliness would soon have faded beneath the drought of summer, unknown to you; your incense would have had no sweet savour. And now, could the companions of your labours behold you in the inner chambers, they would mourn over you, and write "Ichabod" on your prostrate soul! Not so the compassionate God-Man. He has numbered your tears; He has seen your affliction; and He has weighed it against the glory which you cannot comprehend, and for which He is thus preparing you.

Perhaps self-love, or the desire of the flesh, might have destroyed the work *for the Lord;* and in pity He has protected you, that under the shelter of the canopy of cloud you may "enquire of the Lord." Ah,

our mercy-seat is in the Beloved; and there we may learn, as far as we can receive it, why it is thus with us.

Has the Master of the house seemed to shut you out from testimony and service? Will the work dear to you languish? Is the door closed where once you went in and out, proclaiming the name of the Lord, merciful and gracious? Where He so often met you with blessing, He will meet you again; but your eyes are holden that you cannot see Him. Before the throng of angels and archangels, in the presence of the Lord Himself, you shall glorify Him. "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." (Isaiah xlii. 16.)

Is it nothing to live in testimony *before God*, unseen of man? "Walk before Me;" and this must be without any ulterior motive or desire to be seen, or any regard to results. It is only as we do this that the

strength comes for the action of faith. There is many a secret service offered to us, that, like the weary traveller at the Arab's tent, may whisper, "I am sent of God," and for which there is no visible recompence; but it is accepted with the sweet consciousness that it is offered to the Father which seeth in secret. Hospitality is part of the religion of the Arabs. Even an enemy is not denied food and shelter. A stranger goes to the tent with these words, "I am sent of God;" a mat is given him to repose on, and food and milk spread for his refreshment. The Arab considers it a breach of the rites of his religion to deny his guest anything, or to say or do aught that would anger or sadden him at his departure.

General Ducasse when in Algeria, being himself a superior officer, was conducted to the tent of the chieftain, who received him with marked respect. He had one lovely little girl who delighted the General by her grace and playfulness. When weary of her childish sports, in which the old officer had joined her, she sat on his knee and amused

herself with the brilliant decorations of his uniform, resting her glossy head upon his breast. After the General had retired to rest his thoughts dwelt upon the fair young playmate, and he prepared a gift for her that she might in future days remember him. This he desired to bestow with his own hand before his departure. When the chieftain entered his tent the officer enquired, "Where is your beautiful child? May I see her before I leave you?"

The father's face was overshadowed. He replied,

"She sleeps!"

"Nay," urged the General, "I have a gift to bestow on her, and I would give it with my own hand."

"Impossible."

"Oh, let me see her!" urged his visitor.

"No! no!" replied the chieftain sternly, motioning him back; "you cannot see her," and his face was so cold and rigid that his guest dared not press his request. Then, attending him to the door of his tent, he bade him farewell.

The little company had proceeded some distance in silence when General Ducasse turned to his *aid-de-camp* and enquired why his host had been so peremptory in not allowing him to take leave of his lovely little daughter. The reply stunned him.

"Last night, after you retired to rest, she fell from the embankment and was killed on the spot. The rites of hospitality would have been broken had you shared his grief." The religion of the Arab taught him obedience to what he believed to be the commands of God, though he was in heathen darkness as to the unknown God. Here is the call for living faith owned of a living God. There may not be the conscious action of faith at all; but faith is there,—shown in the willingness of patient waiting, which glorifies the Lord.

Nor is it true that, while knowing your position as a child of God, there can be no *real* affliction. Jesus knows otherwise. He *suffered* His Father's will, and agonized, and wept, and was tempted even as we are, yet "without sin."

Suffering and temptation we must necessarily share with the Man of Sorrows alone. Human sympathy can go but a little way with us; though so precious a gift of God, He withholds it, and bestows it as seems good to Him. And natural sympathy without Him is often expended before our trial is over.

But you have learned to know His voice before the cloudy day shrouded Him from your sight. You have loved to trace His hand and mark His footsteps, and now He is teaching you deeper lessons. "Hear Him;" for in this mysterious dispensation He is answering your desire for "more fruit," for which you have importuned Him. Oh, could you look beyond these days of darkness, and see the results, you would be satisfied. Can you not trust Him? You have entreated for blessings for which you were not fitted, and you are thus being prepared to receive them. You would be content for the Lord to work your way to overcome the obstacles in your reception of His gifts; but when He does some "new

thing," and prepares to exhibit to you something more of His rich sufficiency; some nearer view of Himself which shall call forth your adoring wonder; you shrink back afraid and amazed, and cry, "He hideth His face," simply because you lack faith to believe that He has heard your prayers, and is answering your request.

If the Holy Ghost work some "new thing with us and in us (Is. xlviii. 6), let us not fear: the heart is slow to recognize spiritual gifts, and slack to praise for them; for the things of sense need not the delicate perception by which alone the things of the Spirit are discerned. The faith that believes that the grace prayed for must come, may perhaps not discover that the prayer has been heard, until that grace is called into exercise; thus the fruit is visible through some unexpected pruning.

You have no joy in the promises, no delight in the thought of the return of the Beloved. Perhaps joy is not what the Lord is requiring from you, but the patient requirement to believe in His love, and to lay

even these joyous emotions at His feet, resting on His truth.

If in His strength, and for His glory, you can quell one rising murmur, and smooth the furrows on your pain-bent brow, He will rejoice in your prosperity. It is a work for angels and devils to behold, though the world and the Church militant know nothing of it.

The natural—even the fair and beautiful—must give place to resurrection-life. The placid temperament becomes destroyed by sickness, and Satan finds a new avenue of attack, because this gate of the citadel has been unguarded. But if the temper is ruffled, it can be subdued; and Christ's power will arise on its destruction. If the sanguine heart has through constant irritation become anxious and doubting, it is only for the grace of the Spirit to be seen in a new and spiritual hope. Thy right hand may "forget its cunning," yet will the Lord be magnified in the prosperity of His servant. For as Christ is the Root of the Vine, so the Spirit brings forth the fruit. In wintry days the sap re-

turns for the nourishment of the hidden life; and these days of apparent barrenness are seasons when the invisible power still continues its work; and that work is always sanctification in some form or other.

One of the Lord's fruitful branches, so greatly honoured in service, passed through many such seasons of trial. But when called home, he lay for days in such enraptured communion with the Lord, that even his wife, whom he dearly loved, could not share his thoughts; but he said to her, his face glowing with rapture, "The Lord in this says to me, You have often murmured at the way I have led you; but what do you think of it now?"

Be of good cheer; He will rejoice in the prosperity of His servant.

If only in life's pleasant ways
The Shepherd's tender love is known,
Then may I ask, in sad amaze,
If still He careth for His own.

But grief, and weariness, and pain,
Mark where the Man of Sorrows trod;
And he who would the kingdom gain
Must follow Thee, Thou Son of God.

If days of ease, and nights of rest,
  And sweet affection's gentle bands,
Could woo the wanderer to Thy breast,
  Then might I claim them at Thine hands.

For Thou hast every blessing bought,
  Sealed by thy piercéd hands above,
And my salvation fully wrought
  From the deep fountain of Thy love.

And yet I ask for prosperous days;
  Nor wilt Thou, Lord, my suit deny:
For while upon Thyself I gaze,
  My soul shall know prosperity.

CHAPTER VII.

UNDER THE JUNIPER.

"I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me."—HAB. ii. 1.

THERE are two positions for desert trial. In the one, the disciple of the Lord is "led up of the Spirit" into circumstances of temptation and affliction, over which he has no control. The other is, when, like Jonah, he flies from a service which the Lord has clearly required of him; or as Elijan, forsakes, in wilfulness, distrust, or unbelief, the place of testimony to which he has been called.

Sickness, bereavement, and spiritual conflict are often followed by desolation of soul that separates it from the world without,

and leads it into deeper acquaintance with God Himself than it is possible to obtain elsewhere. The other position of darkness is the result of disobedience or sin in some form; sometimes the consequence of self-will, by taking our justification and deliverance into our own hands, forgetting Him "which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number." In a word, the Holy Spirit has been grieved. When David cried, "Make thy face to shine upon thy servant," "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled," he gave utterance to the experience that still marks the pilgrim's heavenward journey. Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit does not manifest the face of the Father, it *is* hidden; and as far as He withholds the realized fellowship in Christ, the soul *is* troubled by the darkness; for the children of the day alone understand the depth of the trial of the desolation of night.

Weary and heart-sick must have been the honoured witness of the God of Israel, when he laid himself down beneath the juniper

and prayed to die. (1 Kings xix. 4.) While he realized the power that sustained him in his service, he boldly confronted armed men and the rage of kings, face to face; but, forgetting the source of his strength, he fled before the threat of a wicked woman.

Instead of the death he prays for, sleep falls upon the desponding man, and one of the bright host of heaven is appointed to minister to his sinking body. So the Lord answers us. The saint, worn out with anxious labour and neglect of communion with the Lord, whose strength alone can sustain him, ceases to realize Him in the day's trial. The mysterious connection of the instrument of the soul with the soul itself is often disregarded, and Satan, taking advantage of physical weakness and infirmity, harasses the sad-hearted servant, until he falls into desolation of spirit, and, like Elijah, he is weary of his work and of his life.

Ye who tarry beneath the juniper, and cry, "Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me, when His

candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness,"— "arise and eat;" for Jesus hath said, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed;" and in the strength of that food ye shall go forty days, if need be, in the wilderness. If the law and judgment roll their fearful thunders over you, yet they will only make more evident the "still small voice" of the Lord, tender and gracious. He will lead you back, after this desert lesson, with a deeper comprehension of the power of Him who has set His servant in the forefront of the battle; and having taught you what you are without Him, He will show you what you may accomplish with Him. Have your enemies, like Jezebel, driven you under the juniper? Fear not them. "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy; for, behold, your reward is great in heaven." (Luke vi. 22, 23.)

We know not what these desert trials

protect us from; what hot blasts of temptation we have been hidden from; what instruction we have received for others and for ourselves; what progress in sanctification has resulted from brokenness of heart. Take courage! The hour of lassitude and depression is not the time to count up what we possess ourselves; but it is the time to believe in the riches laid up for us by the faithfulness of a covenant God, who has said, "I will give thee the treasures of darkness."

To examine our progress in a new country, we do not wait for the day when storms sweep over it, and heavy mists blind our eyes and obscure our view. But we take the chart, and try our way by the Word, which is truth. If my telescope is dim with tears, and I cannot see the object I seek, it does not prove that the object does not exist: I must believe that it is there, though invisible to me. Such a posture of soul honours God in blind faith even more confidingly than when in the exaltation of sense we cry, "He is mine; for I behold Him." It is now, "He has made

with me an everlasting covenant that cannot be broken."

Sad is my heart, and dark as cold;
No light, no joy, is mine:
Return, Thou Holy Comforter,
With hope and peace Divine!

Oh, let Thy soft reviving beams
Show Christ alone my trust,
Although my faithless spirit seems
Still cleaving to the dust!

Earth holds no light for me, O Lord!
Since I Thy face have seen;
I hear no whisper in Thy Word,
The thunder rolls between.

O Holy Comforter! restore
The only joy I crave;
O Lord! reveal Thyself once more;
By Thy salvation—save!

* * * *

I hear the words of tenderness,
Sealed with my Saviour's blood:
"I will not leave thee comfortless;
Behold the Lamb of God!"

Declension will often arise from negligence in taking heed to the Holy Spirit's admonition, or from failing to follow out the desire of grace that has dawned in the heart, or using the devices of the flesh to

complete that which we have undertaken in the Spirit. The sins of negligence, of wilfulness, or of ignorance, are variously met. But if we heed not the first token of the Holy Spirit's witness, shadows may deepen around us; and if we entertain His enemies, He may perhaps leave us to slumber, and to eat the fruit of our doings, before He again manifests to us the precious gift which a Saviour's blood-shedding has secured to us.

Is it *only* comfort, and the removal of a cross, which you seek in these wintry seasons? Then the trial may be eluded for a time by the excitement consequent on the pursuit, and subsequently by the possession, of some earthly good. This will draw your mind away from considering your ways, and understanding why it is thus with you; so that you hear not the voice of God in the cloud, and miss the instruction that lay enshrouded there for you with the blessing.

If your cry is for Christ, in any wise be assured that it will be answered, and your progress will be upwards and onwards: for

He is before you and above you; your cry is sweet to His ear. You moan in your anguish, "My God has forgotten me." Ah! He does not forget. The very shadow proves it. It would appear more like forgetfulness, if He left His wandering child to prosper in the way he has chosen for himself, and in which he has found enjoyment.

To God the Holy Ghost alone pertains the power of unfolding the mysteries of grace; and He only can guide us, consciously or unconsciously, into the path of holiness. If, through pride and unbelief, we close not our minds to His gentle and reviving influence, He will lead us, warn us, encourage and console us, reprove and control us.

I would not make the work of the Holy Spirit a subject of curious enquiry. It is easier to say, "We are nothing in ourselves," and "The Lord is my strength," than practically to cast the soul on Him. We draw comfort and power from the certainty that, as we are commanded to walk in the Spirit, He *will* lead us, if that is our desire; and

that, as we are enjoined to "pray in the Spirit," He will assuredly incline our heart to seek such things as are according to the will of God, if we wait upon Him.

We must not expect Him to operate always in the same manner. "There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." (1 Cor. xii. 5–7.)

The Spirit bloweth where He listeth. The analogy runs through nature. The wind sweeps every leaf of a tree in the same direction. It breaks a dry branch, and overturns a comfortable nest; it dashes to the earth a lofty pinnacle, and wrecks a noble vessel on the waters. It is no less the wind, when it quivers in the clustering roses, and dries the dews of night in the bright cups that send forth renewed fragrance. The same breeze wakes the still lake into tiny ripples, and carries the breath of the spring pasture on its wings.

All His ways tend to the same point—sanctification for the glory of God. Sovereign in His power, He still may be resisted; and by the command given to the Thessalonians, "Quench not the Spirit," it is evident that the actions of grace may be so sinned against that no sensible manifestation of His presence may be accorded.

Without the blessed Spirit, what shall bring our sins to remembrance, or recall the faithfulness of God, or the mediation of the Lord Jesus? The Word will be as a dead letter, without His breath; and the free gifts to man, which Christ's sacrifice promised us, will be a matter of cold speculation.

Where will you look for consolation? To the world, from whose fetters He came to deliver you? To your own intellectual knowledge of the doctrines that once formed the ground of your hope? Oh, trifle not; for God is not mocked. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.

There are times when the soul has melted in remembering what great things the Lord has done for it, and prayer was the spon-

taneous result. But at another time the call to prayer may have been resisted, and a more convenient season suggested, or some forgotten business may have been recalled. The convenient season may never come; and if it comes, and the other unnecessary matter has been completed, the Spirit has been resisted, and leaves you to mourn that you had put anything in place of God.

Again, an hour of solitude offers itself, and you look forward with joy to a time of meditation and prayer. Satan sees it too, and he will seek to destroy the tranquil hour by bringing some of his devices to act upon your imagination, or to arouse your evil passions. If the adversary can gain your ear, he will not be slow in following up his advantage: he will perhaps suggest some circumstance of supposed wrong or oppression that has been or may occur. He presents it in such vivid colours that you could hardly feel less irritated if the event had really taken place, and your heart becomes the seat of turbulent passion or indignation. *Still* keep to your first intention. You looked

for solitude and sweet fellowship with Jesus. Better to be there in conflict and tears than to let Satan have the advantage. He may harass you; he cannot devour you. If he is permitted to afflict the child of God, it is to manifest the power of the Holy Spirit in the weakest member of Christ's body. "We are more than conquerors through Him who loveth us."

The doubts and dishonouring thoughts of God that crowd the mind are too often resisted in human strength. The heart, ceasing to realize the foundation on which it rests, seeks in its intellectual store of the truths of God that which can only be effectual by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Any immoderate desire, any undue curiosity, any enemy of God welcomed and cherished, will militate against the manifestation of the Dove of Peace.

Oh, be not rocked to slumber with Satan's devices, nor think, because others venture to walk in paths of danger, therefore you will avoid all peculiarity and be like *them*, soothing yourself with the thought that you are a

child of God, and cannot be lost. This is turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and influencing others by your example.

To those who follow the Lord faithfully, every sunbeam and shadow will have an interest; as the botanist sees in the commonest weed upon his way another link in his study of nature. Therefore watch.

It is not to "follow," to seek guidance only when some matter is in hand to which we attach importance, but to watch hour by hour that we may read as we run in the way of the Lord. For this there is a sure reward. Yes, in despite of the reproach of those who know not that the power and the presence of God is in a separate walk. Will it be seen in the world's honours, or the eulogy of your brethren? Nay.

What has ease or earthly happiness ever done for us, in comparison to our enemies and afflictions, which, in driving us into the desert, enabled us to realize the fulness and reality of a living Head? Our dearest comforts too often bind us to earth with their silken bonds, until we forget, in the shadow

of the gourd, the mission to which we are called—to follow Jesus.

Prayerfully and patiently seek light and guidance from Him who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not. When you know that He has guided you by His eye, or by His hand providentially, beware lest Satan rob you of your reward.

If another aver that he has received other counsel for you, heed it not, even if he declare an angel spake to him; for if you do, a lion in the way will prove that God is not a man that He should lie. (1 Kings xiii. 18.) Even one who declares himself a man of God may tell you of the need of temporizing and expediency. The Lord is only proving you, whether you will be faithful to what you have sought and found—the will of God.

If you are assured that He has bade you do this thing for Him, *do it.* As for other and subsequent reasoning, whether of friend or foe, put it aside; for the Lord saith, "What is that to thee. Follow thou Me."

Obedience is a costly sacrifice. It is ac-

cepted and accurately weighed by the High Priest of the sanctuary. Do you think that a growth in grace will preserve you from temptation, or prevent the smart of affliction? There is no exemption from the cross, if you walk with Jesus. We miss much blessing by a restless desire for action, when the Lord is calling us aside for quiet communion with Himself through trials which we are so dull in understanding. It is probable that the Lord would reveal Himself to us frequently without this, if we were in our true position; for His voice is heard in tenderness when He has not first to say to us, "Take these things hence. Make not my Father's house a house of merchandize." The natural heart loves to deal with natural things, and does not desire the food from heaven.

Obedience is always the preparation for blessing. "Whatsoever He saith unto you do it. . . . Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water; and they filled them up to the brim:" and wine was the result. The reason that our water is so seldom

changed to wine may perhaps arise from our lack of obedience. What Jesus has said unto us we have not done.

My tent was once pitched in a hamlet remote from a town, and unfurnished with any means of conveyance, except a cart which went to market for provisions. I was surrounded by pleasant lanes and moorland; but I could not take advantage of their proximity, for I was unable to walk; and the garden surrounding my cottage became wearisome to me.

One day I saw a pony carriage pass the door, and, on enquiry, I found it was for hire on the outskirts of the neighbouring village. I was quite alone as to companionship, and longing much for some service suitable to me; but I saw none. My first impression was to hire the carriage; but Satan suggested that it was sinful to take the indulgence. I was depressed and ill. In my distress I poured out my heart to my unfailing Friend, minutely telling Him *why* I wanted the carriage, and praying Him to give it me *if* I could serve Him by using

it, and to make it so plain that it *was* His will that I should not err in the matter. Peace returned to my mind, and Satan's suggestion, like the howl of a wolf, only sent me into the arms of my Good Shepherd.

I waited. The second day had arrived, when a packet reached me containing a sum of money, and a request that it might be appropriated for the use of a carriage. I never learnt who was the instrument of my Father's tender care over me, but in thankful joy I received it from Him who knoweth that we have need of such things.

Although it was evening, I sent for the carriage at once; and my heart bounded as for the first time I passed the boundary of the little field that surrounded my garden. I prayed again that the Lord would grant me a token for good in this first drive; for I longed only to do His bidding.

At the end of the road two ways met—we paused; my driver advocating the high road, while the fragrant air that stole over the wild thyme and gorse and heath, seemed to

invite me to the moorland. I bade the boy take the high road — why, I know not. When we had proceeded a short distance, I remarked an aged Christian lady whom I knew by sight resting on the road-side with her servant, unable to proceed, and too faint to be left to send her maid to seek for any means of conveyance to take her to her home. Tempted by the beauty of the afternoon, she had gone to the village, and, overcome with weakness and fatigue, was in much distress, knowing not how to proceed. The grateful smile with which she let me assist her into the carriage and drive her to her house, I accepted as the sign I asked for, while her tears told how her heart was touched at the Lord's love and care over her.

"What a service! What a sign!" may some say, who go forth into the crowded dens of sin and misery with their lives in their hands! Yea! yea! I say so too! But oh, the grace of God who accepts what we have — not asking for what we have not! Unutterable grace to the vilest and last

called. The same grace! the same God! the same reward!

A day or two later I went by the orchards and fields, giving books and tracts on my way as opportunity offered. The harvest was beginning, it being an agricultural district; thus the cottages were mostly empty, and passengers rare.

Still I prayed for service, and expected it. The wind was high, and a little book which I had sought to throw into a cottage garden was carried after the carriage. I bade the boy alight and take it to the cottage; however, he left it at the gate. Scarcely had he resumed his seat, when the book came careering along, this time before the carriage. The pony became restless, so I bade the driver wait while I took the refractory tract to the house myself.

With the vain effort of fixing it in the handle of the door, the door opened. A woman, whose deathlike countenance and gentle sorrowful mien touched my heart, was startled by my sudden entrance, and turned towards me from a window in another

direction. The first words I spoke to her found an answer in her brightening face. I learned the history of her long-standing and painful malady and of her sorrows. Her sad expression passed away, as we communed of Him who was our very present help, and beneath the shadow of whose wings I was rejoicing.

The time passed swiftly. I took leave of her; but on returning for a moment, I was surprised to see her leaning on her poor thin hands tightly clasped together, while her tears fell fast. I drew near her: she said, "I am weeping tears of shame,"—to me they seemed that they would be numbered among the tears of the saints, accepted of the Lord, and counted "praise."

At last she said, "Oh, ma'am, this is the first day that I have repined. All was so dark to-day. Our people are in the fields. My child is at the village at her school. The kind friends who used to come and cheer me have all left the country. From morning to night I have sat here. I was so lone and heavy of heart; and in the bit-

terness of my murmuring spirit I said, 'Lord! Thou hast taken away all my friends; I have not one left me!' And now before nightfall He sends me one I never saw before. This is how the Lord answers me."

It seemed a very small thing to dry the tears of my Father's child; but to my heart it was a token of His love, which I might have missed had I chosen to go to a distant land to preach the gospel. Numberless are the marks of my Father's care and guidance that my heart records. I have related those which by His blessing may encourage the weakest ones in their loneliness.

The natural heart retains something of the fear of Adam after his fall, and dreads to stand alone with God. We constantly hear sympathy expressed for those who, from the absence of the members of their family or connections, in certain seasons are left alone. Yet in all the momentous transactions with the Lord Jehovah, the soul has been "alone with God."

It was thus with Abraham, Moses, Jacob, Elijah, Samuel, Paul, and John at Patmos. Nor were they "alone" only, but often afflicted also.

When Jacob took his way into the desert alone, he fled from an angry brother, who waited only for his father's death to slay him who had taken his birthright and his blessing. The lonely fugitive had a stone for his pillow; yet it was there, in the wild wilderness of Padan-aram, that He received the first manifestation of the God of his fathers, and beheld the golden ladder let down from heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the earth. In that solitary wilderness the communication from the Lord Himself was given him. Had not Almighty Wisdom foreseen the glory which was to be, with the necessity of that desert teaching, Jacob might still have lived his mother's darling in his father's house, and the glorious vision have remained unseen.

During my residence in the south I had some experience of the blessing of following the Lord, and the sorrow of disobeying Him.

I was very weary with my sojourn in a crowded city, among those either indifferent or hostile to my blessed Lord. I pined for quiet and retirement; mind and body both clearly called for this. My path was so hedged up that I saw no way of obtaining what I so much needed. A happy Christian family whom I knew had a lovely villa out side the walls; and many and many a day the charm of a visit there in Christian fellowship presented itself most alluringly to my mind. I made it a subject of prayer. But it seemed at last so impossible, that I besought the Lord to guide me somewhere—anywhere He willed—for a season of peace, and of deeper fellowship with Himself than I could obtain amid the distracting gaiety of the surrounding scenes.

Gently and distinctly a place was presented to me, from which I *naturally* shrank; but I felt that I had only sought the will of the Lord in the choice of it, and that therefore I ought to follow its leading. Moreover it would lighten a longer journey which lay before me. My portmanteaus were packed,

and I arranged to leave on the following day. It was no small trial to me, when a carriage drove to the door with my friends, who with affectionate solicitude invited me to their beautiful home for a lengthened visit.

My first feeling was one of thankfulness; the next was doubt whether this was my way. I strove in crooked policy to think I might go to the other place *afterwards;* and yet I had asked the Lord as to *time* as well as place.

Dear friends advocated my remaining and accepting the warm-hearted hospitality thus offered. In the conflict I fell into great darkness. Night passed without any light on my path. When the morning broke it was clearly shown me that I *had* received guidance, and that no other would be given me. My heart was at once brought into obedience, and I saw it was sweeter to do *His* will than to enjoy Him in His people.

I fell asleep, and as I awoke there came to my lips, "He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him." (Mark xvi. 7.) My journey was accomplished in peace and

safety; but how can I describe the sequel? The hotel where I alighted was out of the town, and was occupied by one family only besides myself. The deep quiet was welcome to my longing heart. But what can I say of—how can I describe—the faithfulness of my beloved Lord, and the powerful manifestation of Himself? All is comprehended in "Jesus met me;" and I realized *His* joy in being constrained to remain. Those who have known these things in their own experience will comprehend the feelings of these sacred hours, for which we have no words; and may those who as yet know them not learn them for themselves.

Only a few weeks afterwards a leading—as prayerfully sought, and as clearly granted—was met by disobedience on my part, and followed by a shadow as deep as Elijah's must have been when he cried, "Lord, take away my life."

If you would walk with Jesus, you must learn to watch for Him, and recognize Him, and "be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Life's daily

walks will thus open new views of Him to your soul, and a glory will shine upon common things that never can be there unless His sanctifying touch is discerned by you. Then the lowliest duty, performed with singleness of purpose "for Him," will make your soul as a watered garden.

On looking from the terrace of a house in Southern Italy, in a time of drought, I was attracted by one green spot—an oasis in the desert. The citrons and oranges, the roses and rich flowering plants, were bright and blooming; while all around was parched and dry.

I found my way in the course of the next day to this garden, and learnt the secret of its beauty. A large deep well was in its centre; on either side of it were two tanks to receive its overflowing when the storms came; and from thence were several small troughs, which conducted the water to the roots of the large orange trees, citrons, and vines, which were now blooming with flowers and fruit. Then I felt the promise, "Thy soul shall be as a watered garden," coming

powerfully to my heart, and I saw the secret in the deep well; for the rich fertility depended still upon the mountain storms for a full supply.

The *memory* of these cool streams avails us nothing; but only increases our thirst. The garden must be watered every moment.

The Lord knows what is best for His wilderness family: not one good thing will be found lacking when they enter their Father's house. There was a needs-be for every shadow.

There on such landmarks of your spiritual progress you will pause, while fuller praise swells your song, and echoes through your Father's house; for the stars that have marked your midnight march will have shone fairest in their heavenly splendour, as you rose up from the shadow of the juniper.

Let the sweet song of home,
O'er the wild waters swelling,
Cheer lone hearts that battle
The billows among.
Let the "Light of the World"
Be the Light of your dwelling,
And the Father Himself will
Rejoice in your song.

The heart, melodious with praise by its daily recognition of the Lord, is tuned to pray for spiritual blessing for itself and others. Praise seems of such small account in the experience of some of God's people, that many who think they wrong Him and their own soul by neglect of prayer, deem it a light thing to withhold from Him "the sacrifice of praise." When the high praises of God are in the mouth, then the two-edged sword will be wielded in power.

Slow is the heart to believe that the Lord really takes pleasure in his people; pleasure in their prosperity, pleasure in their praise!

It was when the Temple of Solomon resounded with praise, that the glory of the Lord filled the house. It was when those temples of the Holy Ghost (Paul and Silas) were filled with His praise that they burst forth into songs, and the foundations of a prison were shaken, and the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed, and the keeper of the prison fell down, in chains of sin,—to rise up in life and gladness. (Acts xvi. 26.)

The people of Moab, Ammon, and Mount Seir, could not stand before Judah, who came out against them with songs of praise. And as they went out in praise, so they returned, for the Lord made them to rejoice over their enemies. (2 Chronicles xx. 27.)

How is He praised? They that speak of His glory, and talk of His power, make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom. None need be silent. As there are many grains of sand to form the boundary over which the sea shall not pass, so there are a multitude of God's tender mercies for which the soul in recording may praise and take courage; for the boundaries of Satan are set by the same Almighty hand.

Despond not; for in the Lord is your strength. But remember it is God's vine that is pruned, and that you must be a lily in the garden of God ere you can expect Him to be as the dew. Before you can be a watered garden, you must be enclosed from the desert. It is your life in Christ which can alone bring forth fruit; and *all* out of

Him, however fair to your own eyes, and the eyes of others, will be burnt up.

Jesus says, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." (Rev. xxii. 12.)

"And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there." (Rev. xxii. 4, 5.)

AMEN.

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